

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &
Professional Papers

Graduate School

1972

Gestalt therapy: Its potential use in acting

Iraj Sami

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Sami, Iraj, "Gestalt therapy: Its potential use in acting" (1972). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 5024.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5024>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

GESTALT THERAPY:
ITS POTENTIAL USE IN ACTING

By

Iraj Sami

B.S., Weber State College

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

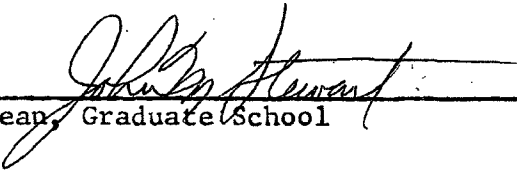
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1972

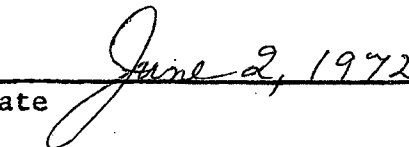
Approved by:



Chairman, Board of Examiners



Dean, Graduate School



Date

UMI Number: EP40488

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP40488

Published by ProQuest LLC (2014). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. GESTALT CONCEPT	12
III. USE IN ACTOR'S PSYCHOLOGY	25
IV. USE IN ACTOR'S APPROACH	36
V. USE IN ACTOR'S EXPERIMENTS AND IMPROVISATION	45
VI. USE IN TRAINING	68
VII. CONCLUSION	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The notion that education consists in the authoritative inculcation of what the teacher deems true may be logical and appropriate in a convent, or a seminary for priests, but it is intolerable in universities... The worthy fruit of academic culture is an open mind, trained to careful thinking..."¹

Open minds and careful thinking has helped actors and trainers to adapt a suitable approach to their ever-changing profession.

From the time of Thespis to the present, acting and actor training has undergone many changes. These changes have been demanded by changes in the physical aspect of the theatre (such as size, or indoor-outdoor). Sociological changes could influence playwrights and thus dictate a change. The psychological aspects of life could demand changes.

Theatrical fashions change almost as quickly as fashions in dress. Plays are ephemeral things, dying each night at curtain-fall to be re-created by the actors the following evening, and all connected with them is subject to constant change and experiment. Styles of setting, acting and production vary from year to year, and from generation to generation.²

Although these changes have given the theatre of the period its unique color, they have managed not to provide additional concepts. Today, basically two concepts are used in actor training. I shall call these concepts the "how" and "do" or "be" concepts. The "how" concept was practiced widely, I believe in the pre-Stanislavsky era. That is to say, the

¹ Charles W. Eliot, Inaugural Address, 1869.

² Peter D. Arnott, An Introduction to the Greek Theatre, (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1959), p. 1.

training concept was to show a trainee "how" to do things onstage. How to walk, how to sit, how to look angry (vocal intonations, postures and facial expressions, "how" to walk and talk humorously or sadly on stage) and so on. An actor then added to these learned "hows" his own "hows", acquired by experience, and by watching other actors and adapting their "bits" and "gimmicks".

The "do" or "be" concept was systemized and organized by Stanislavsky. Here concentration lies not in "how" to show anger, but to "be" angry. Now "how" to walk and sit, but "do" walk and "do" sit.

Today both of these concepts are in existence and are practiced by actors. However, I believe that the Stanislavsky organization and presentation of the "do" and "be" concept finds a greater appeal among actors. This paper is a continuation of the "be" and "do" concept, and should not be considered a replacement of Stanislavsky, but an addition or extension. Stanislavsky's method, I believe, has lost no potency and is as applicable and sound today as it ever was. I believe it is the individuals who have lost their potency. The individual has lost contact with himself, with self reality.

If acting is to be defined as "artistic self expression" then the state of self being is of much importance.

I believe that today's technological society has caused a disturbance within the individual. It has created a dualism within the "organism" which gives rise to a fictitious sense of reality. I hold that no artistic or creative self expression can be achieved, unless the individual is returned to his organic being as a whole, in total contact with his environment.

Since an actor's instrument is himself, and since this self has been

changed in modern society, a change in actor training is in order. I propose that before one starts training for acting, one must become an aware and open organism.

The notion of "only the skills of acting can be taught and not acting itself"³ has always intrigued me. I could not understand the notion that some individuals are born with a "something special." Some call this "special something" talent, or a gift for acting; Benedetti calls it "an unteachable instinct for role-playing."⁴

Regardless of what it is called, the validity of this concept has been questionable to me. I have observed children in two different societies (Iran and the United States) in their game playing. I have noticed their interest in their games, and the sense of reality that they have toward what they do. I have seen this particular or "special something" in all healthy children. I have been captivated as an observer (audience) by their actions, their expressions and their total involvement. This observation made me believe that all men are born actors. However, I could see that some adults could not act on stage. The combination of these observations gives rise to this concept: All men are born actors; that is to say, they are born with this "special something," with an "instinct for role-playing." But somewhere or somehow between childhood and adulthood some people lose this "special something."

The question then becomes, is this "special something" completely lost and destroyed? Is it rather hidden somewhere within an individual?

³ Robert L. Benedetti, The Actor at Work. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 1.

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

With the hope that this "special something" is hidden and not completely destroyed, I continued my observations. I observed people in general in their daily lives and actors in particular off stage. I watched adults in their card playing, on the beaches, in the restaurants, on picnic grounds. I paid particular attention to those people who were called silly or childish. I paid attention to actors' behavior at parties. I organized parties mixing actors and non-actors. I observed them as they arrived at the party, during the party, in game playing, in slightly intoxicated conditions and in sober shop talk and business matters. I simply concluded that the child within the individual definitely exists. Of course, this was a personal belief and observation and had no validity to others. I was unable to verbalize and produce data for my informal observations and personal belief in order to convince others. I was personally facing a new problem which was how to uncover the hidden child within the individual?

The consideration of uncovering the child became more complicated and I tried to analyze the situation after uncovering the child. What will happen to the adult? The question was then how to return an adult to childhood and what to do with the finished product? How will the changed man fit into society?

I could not answer all these questions by myself, by my own observations and experimentations. I needed help; my formal education in drama could not help me with this particular problem. I entertained the notion of adapting philosophy, psychology and sociology. I failed to see philosophy as a possibility, for I believe philosophy may answer the question but does not offer a practical way to the solution. I did find some applicable concepts in existential philosophy such as the acceptance of self and taking responsibility for one's behavior, which I think is very impor-

tant to an individual. It seemed to me that all I could do with philosophy was to tell others, "Be responsible." The philosophy I believe answers the "why's" rather than the "how's."

In my search, I was introduced to Gestalt Therapy, which did answer my questions and I saw a potential use for its approach in acting. I say "potential" use, for I have not, as yet, put the Gestalt Therapy concept and its application to acting into experiment.

I Have chosen Gestalt for the following reasons:

1. It answered by questions; is the child destroyed withing the individual? Could an adult be changed to a child? Could this changed adult live in society?

According to Gestalt Therapy, the purest form of an organism manifests itself in the child. The society molds the child into the adult. The adult becomes a dominant part of an individual, but does not destroy the child within.

The child as an organism is in contact with his environment. This contact with his environment gives a child's actions spontaneity and excitement. A child's reality lies within himself. What he experiences is his reality. The adult, due to sociological and psychological reasons (these reasons will be covered in Chapter II; an outer control - sociological reason, and Chapter III; formation of "ego boundary" and immer control - psychological reasons) has lost his wholeness as an organism. He loses his contact with his environment. His actions become mundane and habitual. His excitement changes to anxiety, his reality lies outside of himself. Now, to say change an adult to a child is to say change an adult into a whole organism who is in contact with his environment and aware of self reality.

The child and the adult could have a harmonious coexistence within an individual. An individual can live within society with awareness. Awareness and self reality give rise to acceptance of things as they are. Awareness does not change the world, but changes one's outlook on life.

2. Gestalt Therapy shows how to reach self actuality and make contact with one's environment and become a "meaningful organized whole."

Self Actuality. - Self - "The self means...this thing as it is defined by otherness. I do it myself means that nobody else is doing it."⁵

Actuality - "Whatever is actual is, as regards time, always in the present. Whatever happened in the past was actual then, just as whatever occurs in the future will be actual at that time, but what is actual... must be in the present. Likewise, what is actual for you must be where you are...You cannot at this moment experience any event...if it takes place beyond the range of your receptors. You may imagine it, yes, but that means picturing it to yourself, and the picturing will be 'here' where you are...Hence the stress, if we wish to develop the feeling of actuality, on words such as 'here'...and 'now'..."⁶

"Here" - Within the range of your receptors.

"Now" - Present, "the time of your present attention span, the time that is right now. Actuality, as you experience it, is your actuality. You cannot experience what is actuality for someone else because you cannot tune in on his private receptors. If you were able to, you would be that person."⁷ Since "here" and "now" is constantly changing, therefore one's

⁵ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 8.

⁶ F. S. Perls, et al, Gestalt Therapy (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), p. 32.

⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

"actuality forever changes."⁸

So Gestalt Therapy explains self actuality and shows "how" one can reach self actuality by using the "here and now" concept (this concept and experiments designed for it are incorporated in Chapter V of this paper).

The potential use of Gestalt in Theatre, in so far as the "here and now" concept is concerned, lies in the fact that theatre tries to bring to "here and now" what was actual or fictitious and what will be actual or fictitious and give it all an actuality. It tries to give a sense of reality and immediacy to the work of a poet, a playwright, and thus create and excitement that an audience could experience. It also provides a means of removing or controlling irrelevant elements in performance - fear of failure, tension, inhibition, etc.

The concept of "here and now" is of much importance to an actor. For his actions and reactions (to objects and other actors on stage) must be on cue, must be "here and now" (on the stage and on the spot). Furthermore, I believe acting is artistic, or creative self expression. Thus, self actualization is of much importance to self expression. Expressing one's self with no sense of self reality seems impossible to me. If such expression is at all possible, it will not be creative.

It is not my intention in this chapter to present all Gestalt concepts that have potential use in acting; I will present them later (Chapter II). I have used this concept here to give an example of how Gestalt explains self actuality and show's "how" to obtain this self actuality and what is its potential use in acting. This example is used here to solidify my reasons for choosing Gestalt.

⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

In adaptations of Gestalt and its potential use in acting, I have chosen the following procedure:

Chapter I - Introduction. - This chapter is necessary to lay the groundwork by answering two questions: 1) Why the change, and 2) Why Gestalt? I dealt with the first question in this manner: a) I pointed out that history of drama has undergone many changes. These changes have been dictated by changes in the physical nature of the theatre as well as sociological and psychological changes, and b) I briefly discussed two concepts used in actor training: The pre-Stanislavsky era (the "how" concept), and the Stanislavsky era (the "do" or "be" concept). Furthermore, I pointed out that the individual has lost contact with himself. This being the case, a change is necessary. c) By presenting the notion that actors are born with a "special something" and concluding (by means of personal observations) that all children possess this "special something" which gets a cover thrown over it during the process of growth, and recovery of this child is necessary for creative self expression. This recovery dictates a change in approach.

I dealt with question 2 - Why Gestalt - by suggesting: a) I could no longer continue with my observations, and my formal education was of no immediate help, b) I entertained the idea of using Philosophy, psychology and sociology. I found Gestalt and believed it to be applicable. For not only did it answer my personal questions, but also provided a platform from which I could verbalize my concepts. c) Gestalt not only presents concepts, and points to dilemmas in human behavior, but also suggests a practical way for correction. By use of an example I pointed out its potential use in acting.

Chapter II - Gestalt Concept. - Since Gestalt does not deal directly

with acting, and is a psychological concept used in psychotherapy, it is necessary to present these concepts as they appear in the field of psychology. This chapter is designed as a reservoir, so to speak, from which I will draw concepts to serve my purpose in the chapters to follow. In Chapter II, I basically introduce Gestalt meaning and concept, present the state of man, processes of self actualization, concentration and maturation.

Chapter III - Use in Actor's Psychology. - Since I believe the actor's psychology is what must be changed, it is logical that the actor's present psychology, and corrective suggestions be presented first. In Chapter III I deal with the actor's psychology, the ego boundary, the cause of division between the organic actor and the social actor and will suggest a harmonious coexistence of child/adult within an individual and I will conclude that a neutral psychological point must be obtained before child/adult interplay can take place.

Chapter IV - Use in Actor's Approach. - The change in the psychology of actors necessitates a change in approach. In Chapter IV I will deal with the actor's approach, today's approach and corrective suggestions.

Chapter V - Use in Actor's Experiments and Improvisation. - The present approach of actors encompasses present experiments and improvisations. A new approach necessitates a new set of experiments and improvisations or reconstruction of present existing ones. Chapter V is devoted to experiments as they are practiced today in acting classes, its dilemma, Gestalt experiments and finally an experiment of my own.

Chapter VI - Use in Training. - New and revised experiments give rise to new conceptions in training and teaching. In this chapter I will deal with actor training and the concept of teaching.

Chapter VII - Conclusion. - I believe that regardless of an individual's

effort, one does not or cannot cover all related aspects of a subject. The main aim of this chapter is to point out the ground I have covered and what important aspects I left out and why, also to point out the work that has to be done.

This procedure seems logical to me since each step necessitates the next and almost covers all related aspects of acting.

The summary of Chapter I is the answer to three questions: Why the change, why Gestalt, and why this particular form. The answers are:

- 1) Psychological changes dictate the change. 2) Gestalt not only points at psychological dilemmas of man, but also provides a practical solution.
- 3) It is logically sound and almost covers all related aspects.

Before starting the next chapter on Gestalt Concept I think a few notes of clarification are in order.

1) I have tried to incorporate all related concepts of Gestalt to acting in Chapter II. However, there are related concepts that appear in other chapters which are not mentioned in Chapter II. In such cases I have shown their relevancy and connection to acting, as the place they appear. I have tried to use all related concepts but may have missed some, in which case I offer my apologies.

2) By no means have I covered all concepts, theories or explanations of human behavior in Gestalt Therapy. I have only chosen those concepts which seem to have immediate practical usage in the acting process.

3) By no means am I giving the Gestalt Therapy a messianic power, nor a magic that can cure all problems of mankind. Neither am I suggesting that Gestalt Therapy is the actor's road to paradise. I strongly believe that Gestalt Therapy is "a" way that an actor can use to reach self actualization or his "real man." For years actors have been warming up, I

think it is time to tune up (of this I will speak later).

4) I have chosen Gestalt Therapy with no discrimination against other schools of psychology. I am taking sides with neither experimental or clinical psychology, objectivism or subjectivism. I have no intention of deciding that phenomenology and existential psychology belongs to Europe or that it should be imported to the United States. I simply chose Gestalt Therapy because of the reasons already explained, and also the fact that it already has made its way into actor training (Benedetti's book, The Actor at Work) as well as humanity in general.

CHAPTER II

GESTALT CONCEPT

The German word "Gestalt" cannot be translated to English, for there is not a word equivalent to it. Some of the close approximations are configuration, pattern, structure, theme, "structural relationship" (Korzybski). The definition that I like and will use is "meaningful organized whole." The authors of Gestalt Therapy have used the following examples to clarify the meaning:

1) As a linguistic example

Pal and lap contain the same elements, but the meaning is dependent upon the order of the letters within their Gestalt. Again bridge has the meaning of a game of cards or a structure joining two river banks. This time the meaning depends upon the context in which "bridge" appears.

2) As a visual example

The color lilac looks bluish against a red background, red against a blue background.¹

By the use of the above examples, I will attempt to make a formula that explains Gestalt.

Gestalt = individual unique pattern/context or background = meaningful organized whole.

Gestalt psychology is a German importation which found its way to the United States a generation ago. Prior to Gestalt psychology, "visual perception" was simply defined as a "collection of visual fragments and assemble them into the object seen." Gestalt psychology, on the other hand insists

¹ F. S. Perls, et al., Gestalt Therapy (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), p. xi.

that "seeing is organized from the start - that is, it is "figure" and "background." "Figure" is the focus of interest - an object, pattern, etc. - with "ground" the setting or context."² The relationship of figure and ground is not a static one, rather, it is a dynamic interplay which is constantly at work. On the following page there are two figures that provide visual aid in understanding the notion of figure and ground and their dynamic interplay.

The Gestalt approach presents two important theories:

- 1) The whole determines the parts.
- 2) The figure/ground concept.

1) "The greatest value in the Gestalt approach perhaps lies in the insight that the whole determines the parts, which contrasts with the previous assumption that the whole is merely the total sum of its elements."³

The Gestalt definition of organism is that an "organism is a living being that has organs, has an organization, that is self-regulating within itself. The organism always works as a whole. We have not a liver or a heart. We are liver and heart and brain and so on, and even this is wrong. We are not a summation of parts, but a coordination, a very subtle coordination of all these different bits that go into the making of the organism."⁴

This, of course, is in opposition of atomistic building block theory which states that the world consists of the sum of particles.

2) The figure/ground concept entered into the vocabulary of psychology in ght form of organism/environment. As you see, Gestalt Therapy is not

² Ibid., p. 25.

³ Ibid., p. xi.

⁴ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, p. 5.

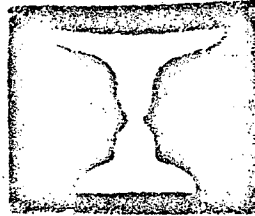


FIGURE 1

In this drawing the figure may be seen as a white chalice on a black background; or two heads in profile silhouetted, if the white area is taken as ground.



FIGURE 2

A young woman in three-quarter view to the left; or an old hag facing to the left and forward.

only to see the organism as a whole, but add environment to the organism, and create a greater whole, so to speak. "An organism is not independent from its environment. Every organism needs an environment to exchange essential substances, and so on. We need the physical environment to exchange air, food, etc.; we need social environment to exchange friendship, love, anger."⁵ In this manner, Gestalt Therapy creates a unity and finds them inseparable. It further denies any dualistic concept within the organism - such as mind and body - and sees the organism as a whole so it is a question of being rather than having. This, of course, is an existential approach.

Today mankind has found himself facing a mirror, and seeing the true reflection of himself, but he is not pleased with what he observes. For centuries man has imagined himself an exalted being in an animal kingdom. His powers of reasoning are unsurpassed by any other living organism. (Creator and inventor of machines that can control nature.) The last four centuries (especially in the West) have been witness to fantastic achievements in power over nature. This technical achievement has made man a god in his own sphere. However, reflections on the mirror show man's destruction. For every step man has taken toward "civilization" he has put an ugly scar on the reflection. Today the reflection, like the portrait of Dorian Gray, is haunting him. Conservationists and ecologists are trying as best they can to prevent further damage to the environment; what can be done to correct the damage done to man himself?

During this period, man became a mechothian (machine worshipper), and since his creation was not "in his own image," he tried to become an image

⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

of his creation. And sure enough, he succeeded. Man became a machine, he adapted the components and properties of the machine. For example, "fast" and "efficient" are words used to express the performance of some mechanical apparatus. The same words are often used to compliment a secretary. Fast rhythm, habitual pattern, unawareness, lack of contact with our environment, and many other mechanical manifestations of our creation begin to manifest themselves in us.

I claim no originality or monopoly on the above observations. To most of us who are blessed by maintaining some of our awareness it is a known fact that mechanization, or technology, has affected man tremendously. Rollo May, in a book called Existential Psychology, expressed his views in this manner:

Our real problem, rather, is given us by our cultural-historical situation. We in the Western World are the heirs of four centuries of technical achievement in power over nature and how over ourselves; this is our greatness and, at the same time, it is also our greatest peril.⁶

May continues further that:

We are not in danger of denying the technical emphasis...but rather we repress the opposite, the awareness of living...one consequence of this repression of the sense of being is that modern man's image of himself and his experience and concept of himself as a responsible individual have likewise disintegrated. I make no apologies in admitting that I take very seriously the dehumanizing dangers in our tendency in modern science to make man over into the image of the machine, into the image of techniques by which we study him. This tendency is not the fault of any dangerous man or vicious school; it is rather a crisis brought upon us by our particular historical predicament.⁷

Karl Jaspers (both psychiatrist and existentialist philosopher) holds that we are actually in the process of losing self-consciousness and that

⁶ Rollo May, et al., Existential Psychology (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 3-4.

⁷ Ibid.

we well may be the last age of historical man.

The struggle of contemporary man with his dislocated world has been the subject of studies for many philosophers, psychologists, and masters of literature. Some of these observations are stated with a pessimistic point of view, with no hope for the future. Others take an optimistic outlook, with a glimmer of hope, but no remedy.

Dr. Perls, in his book, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, refers to this generation as the "turner-onners." A generation that looks for "instant cure." The society today promotes "instant" and "quick way" to all human needs, from instant food to instant joy. Perls' picture of the younger generation consists of a youngster against a background of atomic explosions, and militaristic control. This horrifying figure/ground formation dictates to youngsters to become rebellious.

He discovers that producing things, and living for things, and exchanging things, is not the ultimate meaning of life. He discovers the meaning of life is that it is to be lived, and it is not to be traded and conceptualized and squeezed into a pattern of systems. He realizes that manipulation and control are not the ultimate joy of life. These discoveries and realizations of the younger generation give only a rebellion and no revolution.

The rebel wants to get something out of life - he wants to become real and exist. So the quickest way is to turn on. The quest for pseudo-spontaneity, instant joy, instant sensory-awareness drives him to join the "turner-onners."

In explaining the present state of man, I tend to believe that technology is to blame. However, I am quite aware that there are those with a different point of view. The cause of this maladjustment is not the point that I wish to make. The point is that these conditions exist.

There are people who are conditioned, who live up to the expectation of others or society; there are those who live for things; there are those

who have lost the sense of awareness, become robots and machines. It is also undeniable that there are others who have found shelter in an unrealistic jazz-it-up, turner-onner circle seeking a short cut to humanism. Once again without passing value judgements or putting any emphasis on the cause of this disconnection between man and his environment, I simply state that there are "mechanical" men and "turner-onner" men. Dr. Perls points out (and I agree) that somewhere between these two groups lies the real man. And he claims that the Gestalt Therapy is the way to return man to this state of reality, and actuality. Since Gestalt Therapy does not offer an "instant cure" it relies strongly on good will and willingness of the individuals. Along with patience, sincerity and openness of the individual with himself are also required.

A thousand plastic flowers
Do not make a desert bloom
A thousand empty faces
Do not fill an empty room.⁸

Now that we know there are real human beings in between the mechanical man and the "turner-onner," we have to find the way to reach him. First of all, what is reality or actuality? Actuality is "the total contact of an organism with his environment." This statement gives rise to several questions. Before going any further, let me remind you once again, in Gestalt Therapy, organism/environment is a unified pattern with a dynamic interplay and must be studied as a whole. I have already defined organism as a living being that is self-regulating within itself. We are a very subtle coordination of all the different bits that go into the making of us. I also mentioned that organisms need an environment (physical and social) to exchange essential substances with. Now the statement suggests (since

⁸ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, p. 2.

actuality is the contact of an individual with his environment) that reality or actuality is dependent upon the individual. Since individuals are not the same, there must be a different reality or actuality for different individuals. This is the only way the actuality could exist. I refer you to the authors of Gestalt Therapy:

Actuality, as you experience it, is your actuality. You cannot experience what is actuality for someone else because you cannot tune in on his private receptors. If you were able to, you would be that person. You can share an experience with someone in the sense that you and he may experience similarly some situation which you and he have in common, but what he experiences is his and what you experience is yours.⁹

Now, if we consider the biological changes within an individual, it must follow that his feeling of actuality and reality is changing also.

True again.

Actuality forever changes. In healthy persons the feeling of actuality is steady and continuous but, like the view from a train window, the scenery is always different.

When actuality seems fixed, permanent, unchanged and unchangable, it is a fictional actuality which we continuously build anew because it serves some present purpose of our own to preserve the fiction.¹⁰

Actuality is a unique individual experience in contacting one's environment, and contacting something requires sensory awareness. We can only relate to our environment through our senses. Sharp senses and total awareness is the requirement of total contact. Awareness is characterized by contact, by sensing, by excitement and by Gestalt formation. Contact is possible without awareness but for awareness, contact is indispensable. Let us examine how contact is possible without awareness. Recently the motion picture THE FRENCH CONNECTION was awarded 5 Academy Awards, inclu-

⁹ F. S. Perls, et al., Gestalt Therapy, p. 33.

¹⁰ Ibid.

ding the Best Film Award. Now the spectator (who has respect for the Academy's judgement) will view this movie and report favorably. The crucial question is: With what is the spectator in contact - the Academy or the picture? Now, with awareness, the contact will be only with the movie, regardless of the Academy's opinion. For an aware person is always in contact with his own actuality, not others. Sensing determines the nature of awareness, whether distant, close or within the skin. Now to emphasize: through our senses with awareness, we contact our environment.

Here one more aspect of contact must be made clear. We can make contact with our environment only in a given place and at the present time. No one can make contact with the past or the future and with a place that he is not part of. This is the concept of "here and now" which is the key toward achieving self actuality. I am here and now with my awakened senses and with awareness I make contact with my environment and am united with it and this is my actuality and reality at the present. This organism/environment or figure/ground formation is what makes the distinction between the healthy and the disturbed.

Attention, concentration, interest, concern, excitement and grace are representative of a healthy figure/ground formation, while confusion, boredom, compulsion, fixation, anxiety, amnesia, stagnation and self-consciousness are indicative of figure/ground formation which is disturbed.¹¹

I mentioned that "here and now" is the key to actualization. How can this be achieved? Many experimental reports testify that most people have trouble staying with here and now exercises. Most reports show that the individual either drifts into reminiscence about the past or daydreams about the future. Staying with the here and now creates difficulty for most

¹¹ Ibid., p. ix.

people for it requires concentration. What is concentration? I believe there are two kinds of concentration. I will call them 1) forced concentration, and 2) organic concentration.

1) Forced or deliberate concentration is when we pay attention where we feel we ought to. "In our society concentration is regarded as a deliberate strenuous, compulsive effort - something you make yourself do."¹² This kind of concentration is, unfortunately, the only kind we know. When we are asked to perform a simple task in a "here and now" experiment, and explain our sensation and express it in the present tense, we black out. We either find ourselves in the past or future and sometimes in another place altogether. For this behavior we have only one explanation - I cannot concentrate. The authors of Gestalt Therapy will agree with us.

Inability to concentrate comes from years of carefully learning to hold parts of your personality at bay as if otherwise they would ferociously eat you up. Then when these parts are needed for something you try to do, you cannot beckon them back by the mere crooking of a finger.¹³

Forced concentration can only be done superficially. The amount of energy wasted in this kind of concentration is noteworthy. Two-thirds of total energy is wasted. When you cannot concentrate on a task forcefully, there are some distracting elements present. Something is trying to get your attention. Part of total energy is used to create this distraction. Yet you have a task to concentrate on, therefore you use another part of your total energy to demolish the distractor. So from you a total energy of only one-third is devoted to the task. This situation usually creates tension and eventually ends up in anger. If less than one-third of the

¹² Ibid., p. 54.

¹³ Ibid.

energy is devoted to the task or subject of concentration the result is boredom.

2) Organic concentration is the kind of concentration that can usually be observed in children. Watching a child play, you notice that he is completely absorbed in what he is doing. You see, I used the word absorb instead of concentrate, for healthy organic concentration is never called concentration, but absorption, interest, fascination. Sometimes we use the expression that the child is lost in his game. Now this figure/ground formation is in complete unity. Senses awake, awareness alert, complete and total contact with environment, self actuality (not verbalized, intellectual actuality), here and now, all and all united together to create a healthy being. All this takes place with little or no loss of energy. It has spontaneity, it is creative, it is filled with attention and excitement. I shall refer to this organic being in the following chapter. To me, it is very important to pay attention to children, for they are the purest form of the adults. This is the pure state we once lived in before thousands of "no's" and "don'ts" and before adaptation of a half-dozen artificial masks. Of this, also, I will speak in the following chapter.

Now, I am suggesting that organic concentration is necessary for taking the first step (which is here and now) toward awareness. How can this be done if we are no longer children? This problem is similar to the Gestalt Therapy problem. In order to understand Gestalt Therapy, one must have a "Gestaltist" mentality, and to acquire such a mentality one must understand Gestalt Therapy. It seems to be a vicious circle. To clarify this I must ask for the help of the authors of Gestalt Therapy again. The authors claim that they did not invent such a mentality, on the contrary, they believe that:

The Gestalt outlook is the original, undistorted, natural approach to life; that is, to man's thinking, acting, feeling. The average per-

son, having been raised in an atmosphere full of splits, has lost his wholeness, his integrity. To come together again he has to heal the dualism of his person, of his thinking, and of his language. He is accustomed to thinking of contrasts - of infantile and mature, of body and mind, organism and environment, self and reality, as if they were opposing entities. The unitary outlook which can dissolve such a dualistic approach is buried but not destroyed and...can be regained with wholesome advantage.¹⁴

It is buried but not destroyed and can be regained - willingness is all. This is to say a return to childhood is needed. This seems to be the reverse order - the child should reach maturity, not vice-versa. A paradox is obviously involved.

Maturity has different meanings to different people. Some think of maturity as reaching midway between birth and death. So if the life expectancy is from 50 to 60, the person who is 20-30 is considered a mature person. Others believe that maturity is the end of growth. Some claim that a mature person is one who knows himself and accepts himself. Indeed, there are many more definitions for maturity, but none of them relate to the living organism. Let us consider plants and animals. Without man's interference, they continue to grow, never stopping their own growth. If we accept that man is a living organism then we further believe the notion of organism/environment as a whole. Also, by keeping in mind that self actualization is a continuous motion or is an ever changing process, we must believe that maturity for all practical purposes (not considering religious beliefs, or any other denominational concerned with the notion of life after death) occurs when an organism ceases to live.

Dr. Perls' formulation of maturity intrigues me: "Maturing is the transcendence from environmental support to self support." Dr Perls explains that the unborn infant is totally dependent on its environment (mother's

¹⁴ Ibid., p. viii.

womb) for biological needs - oxygen, food, shelter and so on - that is to say it is totally supported by its environment. At birth he has to start to breathe for himself. From here step by step, man moves toward self support. Can this state of total self-support be reached before death? (Dr. Perls' answer to this question is no.) As long as I breathe air I am dependent on my environment. So maturation is a life long process (if it is left to its own course, with no interference from the organism itself) or learning and growing.

Adulthood to some people means maturity. I have made extensive use of the word "adult." To clarify: when I say "adult" by no means am I referring to maturity as it has been presented in the above statement. Furthermore, I believe that this particular concept of maturity is important in the aspect that it is a life long process of learning and growing. An individual should not think that at any point in life one can safely rationalize that it is too late to learn or change. Never is it too late, one can always learn.

So far I have been talking about Gestalt Therapy, and trying to explain the concepts which lead us to the "real man." The question may be raised, and a valid one indeed, since reaching the real man is a therapeutic process (Gestalt Therapy), does it not necessitate a therapist? The answer is no. First of all let me refer you to a quotation I used earlier. Real man in us "is buried but not destroyed." Willingness to recover it is all. Secondly, the book, Gestalt Therapy, is written to be used in one's home and in the comfort of his privacy. Thirdly, if one reaches the state of awareness and self actualization, one becomes his own therapist. The hope of all Gestalt therapists is to guide one to reach

awareness and self actualization. There is no gimmick in their approach, no hypnosis nor other devices used by other schools of psychotherapy. Their approach is subjective, not objective - they do not deal with man as if he were a machine. They do not diagnose and they do not write prescriptions. The ultimate cure is within you - all they do is help you to find it. There is no need for a therapist, especially in self actualization.

In this chapter I defined Gestalt as "meaningful organized whole" and presented the figure/ground concept. I also pointed out that Gestalt Therapy uses figure/ground in the form of organism/environment and their dynamic interplay and self actualization takes place when the organism is in total contact with his environment. "Here and now" is the starting point toward self actuality. Concentration is necessary to achieve the "here and now" concept. I have defined concentration and maturation, for both words have different connotations to different people. This chapter should serve as a source for the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

USE IN ACTOR'S PSYCHOLOGY

The value system in each society has two sides which are: the side that society identifies with and the side it alienates. This identification and alienation gives rise to the concepts of good or bad, right or wrong. An individual who stays on the identification side of the scale is considered responsible and well adjusted in accordance with sociology and psychology. On the other hand, the individual who tends to move toward alienation is considered a criminal and maladjusted. Naturally the psychological attitude and behaviors of the two sides of the scale are different. Now, by actor's psychology I mean the actor's place in this scale system. Where is the actor's place from which he can practice his art with no psychological complications?

In this chapter my aim is directed toward the present psychological state of actors. With reference to present situations of man (Chapter II) and the aid of the Gestalt concept of "Ego Boundary" I will present the social actor and the child actor as coexisting parts within an individual. Furthermore, by pointing to the dilemma in choosing either the social actor or the child actor as separate entities in stage acting I will conclude that child/adult harmonious coexistence is necessary for a stage actor. Finally I will suggest that by reaching a psychological equilibrium point, an actor can easily permit the ultimate dynamic interplay between child and adult to take place.

The Present Situation of Actors. - In Chapter II I described the present situation of man. Actors, of course, are not exceptions. They, too, are

the product of this society. They have no immunity to technology and seek pleasure and instant joy. They once, like other men, were in contact with their environment. Once as a child they were complete and pure organic beings; they were aware, they were sensitive and in total contact with their surroundings. They were ready to expose themselves openly, to experience alien society, and with excitement, satisfied their curiosity. The new experiences were deposited daily to their memory bank, and their senses were continuously developing to their fullest potentials. Their imagination, concentration, sincerity, sensitivity and spontaneity were inseparable parts of their existence. With such natural gifts a child is delivered to the hands of a systematic society (the family being the first unit of society) to be molded and conditioned into a rigid and mechanical being, to become a follower of a certain unified principle adapted by his society, and satisfy its expectations, disregarding his organic preference. In this forced condition a peculiar phenomenon takes place. A separation, or disconnection of the organism from his environment begins to form. Here a "self boundary" begins to set in, which later on becomes crystallized and rigid. This new Gestalt formation shifts the center of the organism and changes its "wholeness" to dualism.

Ego Boundary. - "Self (ego) boundary" simply starts with self possession, such as "mine" and "ours" in the opposite of "yours" and "theirs". The word "self" or "ego" is extensively used in psychology. However, there are different conceptions and definitions for this word in different schools of psychology. In Gestalt Therapy the word "self" is written with a lower case "s" rather than a capital "S". This means that "self" in Gestalt Therapy is not considered something precious or valuable. Dr. Perls, opposing the view of other schools of psychology states:

They go at the discovery of the self like a treasure - digging. the self means nothing but this thing as it is defined by otherness. "I do it myself" means that nobody else is doing it, it is this organism that does it.¹

The word "boundary" is a simple one to understand when it is applied to define objects and areas. In sports, a boundary is defined by the lines that designate the playing area. In the case of objects, the space it occupies defines its boundary. But in the case of an organism and its environment, the boundary is more complicated. Dr. Perls states:

Boundary between organism and environment is more or less experienced by us as what is inside the skin and what is outside the skin, but this is very loosely defined. For instance, the very moment we breathe, is the air that comes in still part of the outside world, or is it already our own? If we eat food, we ingest it, but can still vomit it up, so where is the place where environment ends. So the ego boundary is not a fixed thing. If it is fixed, then it again becomes character, or an armor, like the turtle. The turtle has a very fixed boundary in this respect. Our skin is somewhat less fixed, and breathes, touches, and so on.²

So Gestalt Therapy defines "self" as that which is in opposition to otherness, and its boundaries somewhat flexible.

The two phenomena of "ego boundary" are identification and alienation. I identify with what is mine - my body, my family, my friends, my country and so on - and alienate others - your friends, your family, your country, etc. Now, if you and I find a common ground of interest or likeness of personality, the alienation turns to identification. That is, you and I combine to form we (flexibility of ego boundary), and if under some unified principle (such as a church or club) which is shared by many, the ego boundary extends to form "ours" - our church, our country. Needless to say, every unified principle of society has its own sets of rules and

¹ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, p. 8.

² Ibid., pp. 7-8.

regulations, and contains within it a value system which is to be followed and obeyed by all members. This systematic pattern, of course, is not tailored to fit the desires or preferences of the individual. This outer control or social demand forces the individual to create a control device within himself which is synchronized with the outer control. I will call this control device within the individual "social actor." I mentioned that the child is totally aware, and is in contact with his environment. He reacts with spontaneity. His action and reaction have an organic motivation. On the other hand, the social actor has changed his awareness with self consciousness. His contact with his environment is superficial and calculated. His reactions are not spontaneous but rehearsed and habitual. His action and reaction is motivated by what is proper and right. This concept of proper and right, of course, is in a constant change - what is right and proper at home is not right and proper at the office, what is proper at the country club is not proper at church. Thus, the changable nature of proper and right forces the social actor to play many parts, or adapt many (as Pirandello calls it) masks. Constant usage of the masks finally becomes habitual to the extent that one is not even aware of wearing one.

Although social acting becomes dominant, it does not destroy the child within an individual. Another name for the social actor would be the "adult." This coexistence of adult and child is of much importance in my formulation of the stage actor and his psychology. Before presenting my formula for the stage actor a closer look at the social actor is necessary. For the social actor has been suggested by some as a model or starting point for stage acting.

The expression social actor has been adapted and used by Robert L. Benedetti in his book, The Actor at Work. Mr. Benedetti, after paying tri-

bute to playwrights and directors, points to the actor as the carrier of a burden and responsibility. After explaining an actor's job as a three-fold proposition and an additional "unteachable instinct" for role-playing, Mr. Benedetti adapts the William James theory on personality, holding that personality is a complex structure consisting of an "I" and several "me's". These "me's" within an individual are the ones that carry on the role playing concept. These "me's" are the building blocks of a social actor. Furthermore, with the aid of Erving Goffman, who holds that stage acting should be an easy task, for we are daily involved in role playing (Goffman of course, admits that stage acting is much more and requires a deeper specialization). Goffman concludes that we "all act better than we know how."³ Taking this to heart, Mr. Benedetti concludes "our skill as social actors gives us a firm foundation upon which to build."⁴ Mr. Benedetti finally crystalizes his formulation about the good actor in the following statement: "The good actor is rarely "himself" on stage; he has put himself into his character rather than forcing the character to conform to his own habitual manner of expression and thought."⁵

The second part of this statement is my definition of a social actor. A social actor is a forced character. He has adapted an alien self with a habitual manner of expression and thought. The adult in him is so dominating that the child is almost non-existent. The "me's" are not aware but self conscious, they are not spontaneous but mundane, their reality consists of the audience and its approval. They act to please, as they do

³ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Joy, Grove Press, 1967)

⁴ Robert L. Benedetti, *The Actor At Work* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 5.

⁵ Ibid.

in society. The social actor adapts all these "me's" for the social reason rather than a biological reason. To me, the biological reason is a need for an organism to express himself artistically. The social actor has a reason for being on stage rather than a need. If I may use the cliché, he loves himself in theatre rather than loves theatre in himself. So you see that I cannot consent to leaving the stage to the social actor. If we are to take acting as a real form of art, gimmickery does not belong. I grant you that it will work for a while, but not long.

Take an artist who knows how to paint trees, a river and a mountain beautifully. In his limited artistic vocabulary he can come up with one good painting or maybe two, but from there on he has to repeat himself. The repetition, of course, has no artistic value. It is the same case with a social actor. He may use some of his well adapted "me's" in one or two roles successfully but as soon as he is out of masks, he has to leave the stage or play the same part for as long as he can.

His limited number of masks is almost negligible in comparison to his psychological limitations. The limitation like "ego boundary" is a social product, and is a characteristic of a social actor. Here I am not taking issue with society and its effect on an individual. I am simply stating that an individual affected by society has no place on stage. An actor with definite ideas about good and bad, right and wrong, is constantly jeopardizing his performance, while as a person might be considered a well adjusted being. Take, for example, the part of a prostitute on stage; a young girl might have many problems psychologically identifying with this character. Modesty, inhibition, morality, political commitment, religious beliefs, social status, social acceptability and limitations are

all inseparable parts of a society and rightfully so. If a society is to survive it has to have a set of rules and regulations for all members to follow. An actor must operate from a neutral point, with no value judgments and side-taking.

Before explaining limitations let me refer you to self actuality and maturity (Chapter II). An individual actuality is unique in the sense that it is his actuality and only his, and his maturity is a continuous process of growth and learning. Keeping these concepts in mind, I will consider a social actor's psychological concept of limitations undesirable for a stage actor.

What is limitation? Limitation is the result of comparison, competition and what I call the Don Quixote complex. No human being should feel limited in any way. Probably, physical limitation is the most obvious of all, and in its extreme cases is called a handicap. Is not this concept of handicap set up by comparison? Haven't we set up a systematic classification and specification to define normality? Don't we compare individuals with this model man? We certainly do. In the first place the word "normal" is a very unstable word. It depends upon location and time. In the second place, this normal man or model man belongs to the first page of a biology text. It has made a great contribution to the study of biological science. However, it does not represent man. Thirdly, if you believe, as I do, that reality and actuality are a personal thing, you must believe that my self actualization is mine and only mine. You realize that no comparison is valid unless there is another me. Since there are not two individuals who are identical (even in identical twins there are some differences) all comparisons are in vain. It has as much validity as comparing men to birds, and concluding that man is limited because he cannot fly.

In short, all individuals are different from one another and we should have as many models as there are men. Please note that some of the people who are so called handicapped, after reaching their self actuality, have been able to accomplish wonders in anybody's language. We all know of blind musicians who have accomplished more than most people with 20/20 vision. Here I suggest to you that the limitations, set up on the basis of comparison, is a fallacy and prevents self actuality and thus stops self mobilization from reaching its fullest potential.

A social actor constantly compares himself with others. He has no self reality, but his reality lies outside of himself. Through a series of invalid comparisons he will adapt a fictitious reality for himself. This fictitious reality manifests itself over and over in an actor's attitude toward himself. The dilemma of comparison in acting manifests itself in the following manner:

1) It stops one from reaching fullest potential. There are three kinds of comparison: a) comparing one to one's equal, b) comparing one to one's inferior, and c) comparing one with one's superior. All these invalid comparisons result in a stopping point. Argumentation will go along these lines: "I am as good as you are." "I am better than you are." "I am not as good as you are." The only valid comparison would be self comparison - "I am better than before," and so on.

2) Miscasting one's self because of fictitious reality of self.

3) Imitation of a respospected actor.

The second kind of limitation stems from competition. Competition and contests have a deep root in the history of mankind. The Olympics, the oldest form of organized competition, date back to 1370 B.C., under the sponsorship of Pelops.⁶ Competition in sports is amusing and exciting,

but I fail to see any amusement and excitement in competition when it is applied to acting and art. Sports competition (disregarding the commercialism that is attached to it today) is based as closely as possible on individuals/groups who have practiced and mobilized their motor systems to the fullest capacity. The competitors are evenly matched, and the rules of the game are the same for both. If we are to define acting, or arts in general, as organic need for an artistic self expression, competition becomes a meaningless word. A social actor is used to competition, and comes to try-outs to compete with others rather than trying for a part. The social actor with competition in mind is called a ham actor - a scene stealer. He is out for himself. This attitude will destroy the unity of a play. If he is to compete with other actors on stage he cannot be in contact with them. He wants to be noticed - he does not want to be a unified part of the whole.

The third kind of limitation I mentioned is what I called the Don Quixote complex. That is to say, an individual reaching for the unreachable star, the desire to be a superman. This really does not account for human limitation, but human stupidity. The Don Quixote complex manifests itself in theatre by the wish or desire on an actor's part to become an overnight success. I am not suggesting that such wishes have never been fulfilled; on the contrary, Hollywood for years has promoted and produced overnight stars, for the purpose of economic gains. This Hollywood commercialism and star making machine has planted many unhealthy seeds in young stage actors. The desire to reach fame and fortune overnight has no room in theatre. You can wish for an instant cure, an instant self awareness, a pill that makes one into a fine actor, but these wishes remain as such, only wishes, no more. The desire of reaching one's fullest potential is commendable in an indi-

vidual, but such desires are a time consuming process and dependent on an individual's effort. To desire an unaccomplishable task, beyond human possibility, belongs to fictitious characters such as Don Quixote; the Don Quixote complex is an irrelevant to stage acting as it is to life.

Stage Actor. - I hold that part of the child exists within us. The organic actor manifests itself when you play with your dog, when you participate in children's games, when you spend half a day playing with the toy train you bought for your son. In stage acting, the organic actor within the adult plays the part. He plays it with a sense of reality, with spontaneity and creativity, if the adult does not interfere. So what are we to do with this interfering adult? This adult has a very important part in an actor's creation as long as he remains an objective observer during the performance. This may suggest a dualism to you, but I am not suggesting such a thing. My hands and my feet are part of my body as a whole. If they are assigned to different functions, it does not mean they are a separate entity. My mind is as much a part of me (the organism) as are my eyes. The healthy organism has all his parts carrying their assigned functions harmoniously. So without creating dualisms we can assign different functions to different parts of the body. The function I assign to the adult is analyzing the play and the character, and acting as an objective observer during the performance and evaluator after the performance. A child does the rehearsal and the performing only. The dynamic interplay of adult and child is our stage actor.

This interplay is identical to Gestalt figure/ground interplay. That is to say, figure becomes ground and ground becomes figure, without losing wholeness. During a performance the child is figure and the adult is ground and this reverses before and after the performance. So stage acting as

well as other performing arts is a Gestalt formation, is a meaningful organized whole, is a figure/ground concept with their dynamic interplay. We give the proper part the proper function. With this explanation I will conclude that:

Stage Actor = Child/Adult + their dynamic interplay.

CHAPTER IV

USE IN ACTOR'S APPROACH

In the last chapter I attempted to show how Gestalt might be used in producing the psychology of actors. This chapter engages in the actual process of acting and involves potential reappraisal of the various acting "methods" to accomodate Gestalt concepts.

As I mentioned in Chapter I, actor's change in psychology dictates a change in approach. Before discussing the actor's approach, I would like to attract attention to a very important point, which is the core of this approach to acting. Please note that in Chapter II in discovery of the real man I suggested the influence of an outer control on an individual. Namely, technology and society as a whole, act as the controlling agent outside of self to change the individual either to a mechanical man or a turner-onner. In the search for the stage actor (Chapter III), I have reversed the process. I started from ego boundary and inner control. The importance of the point does not lie in the end result, for in either case the result is a dualism. The significant difference is in responsibility. The outer control suggests denial of personal responsibility. It creates a kind of resignation in an individual, the feeling of, "I can't fight the world or society. I have no choice." On the other hand, the inner approach necessitates personal responsibility and choice. This approach changes the outer reality into inner reality, self actualization. If an individual is aware of self reality, if he is in total contact with his environment, then limitation to him becomes a meaningless word. Separation of mind and body is impossible for him. He becomes a part of his environ-

ment rather than an observer. He then knows that he is he and you are you, therefore competition and comparison have no value to him. He is in touch with reality, he is constantly in the process of learning and growing and will reach his own star and leave the unreachable star to Don Quixote.

Here I suggest that the approach to acting starts from inside an actor and by himself. This inner approach, of course, has been used in theatre before (the Stanislavsky method), and I claim no monopoly on the concept. The uniqueness of Gestalt lies in the fact that it accentuates sensitivity and awareness of an individual, and prepares a proper ground to start artistic self expression. Take a pianist; regardless of his years of training and practice, he is unable to play beautifully on an untuned piano. This is why I call the Gestalt approach the "actor's tune up." Granted, there are different kinds of pianos, but one sounds it's best when tuned up. It is only by self awareness and total contact with his environment that an actor's approach to acting becomes a personal artistic self expression.

Although every actor has his own approach to acting there are two general categories recognized today: 1) technical, and 2) method.

1) The technical actor, to me, is simply an actor who is trying to convey to an audience an inner emotion by it's physical manifestations.

2) A method actor, on the other hand, tries to give rise to inner emotions and let the physical manifestation take care of itself. The basic difference here, it seems to me, is where one's concentration lies, in the physical aspect of emotion or the emotion itself.

The technical approach, to my knowledge, is no longer practiced in the educational system. However, there are technical actors. Since their

approach is to copy or recreate the physical manifestations of an emotion, they tend to play "generalities." Anger, for example, has specific general manifestations such as loudness and intensity of voice, abrupt and outgoing gestures and other audio-visual properties that suggest to the observer the feeling of anger. Such recreation, at its best, suggests to an observer a good imitation of a real emotion. Some observers may go as far as to say that this imitation is good acting. At this point I am not concerned with the observers definition of acting and theatre, but the actor's.

What is acting to a technical actor? Is playing generalities an artistic self expression? What kind of personal satisfaction is there?

Technical actors appear to be unaware of any "organic" need for self expression. I believe that a technical actor's work in theatre is without spontaneity and reality. I realize that there are many arguments opposing my view point. There are method actors who depend on the technical approach in some scenes. I think this reliance on technique on the part of a method actor is an act of desperation, or an easy way out. A technical actor lets the "adult" within him perform, which in in opposition to my theory (the child within an individual must perform, and there should be no interference from the adult during the performance). Keeping this opposition in mind I conclude that there is no room for the technical actor in theatre. An actor should use techniques only in desperation and not as an easy way out. Here a differentiation must be made between skill and technique. Skill is necessary for actors, while technique is helpful.

The method approach is valued and applicable only if it is used on an aware and open system. The first step is self actualization and awareness.

Gestalt Therapy is a "must" for actors, not so much that the comple-

tion of time consuming self actualization produces great stage actors, but makes one ready to answer an ignored question, "Why theatre," which to me is the first step toward acting.

This first step toward acting is will, and it is determined by answering the question, "Why theatre?" Why theater as an artistic and creative form of self expression? I am not going to formulate an answer to this question. There is no set pattern, you will have your own answer. Self actualization will help one to answer this question honestly and organically. No matter what your answer will be, it will have some organic satisfaction in it. This organic root is what gives rise to will and determination to face the hardship that lies ahead.

The second step toward acting is development of the inborn artistic creativity to the fullest potential. Gestalt already has started you in the right direction, but you must penetrate much deeper. Adaptation of Gestalt is not wholly for the purpose of self actualization and self orientation, but to provide a working and practical platform. The Gestalt concept provides this platform. Here the two concepts of Gestalt, it seems to me, are quite appropriate to artistic creativity: 1) "distruction and creative construction," and, 2) "creative pre-committment."

1) The statement is self explanatory and any further explanation would be a tautology. This process is best demonstrated by poets. Note how a poet creates his beloved one, note the levels of abstraction, the details concerning primary and secondary properties. The poet by destroying his loved one as she is, creatively constructs her in a more beautiful pattern. As an actor you must constantly destroy mundane, habitual, everyday things and creatively construct them. Use the experiment concerning the pencil (as it appears in Chapter V) on all the objects you contact.

Listen to music, look at paintings, contact your environment (in the Gestalt concept, don't be an observer of beautiful scenery - be a part of it; don't observe people - contact them). Taste your food, smell flowers or your body odor or other's, for that matter. Get to know objects by touch, smell, taste. This sense experience, with the aid of sharp imagination, will help "distruction and creative construction" and thus sharpen the artistic creativity.

2) Creative pre-committment or zero point is the neutral point. The inhibition, for instance, is caused by leaving the neutral state in favor of sociological or religious morality. Inhibition might be an advisable behavior in daily life, and a good mask for a social actor, but has no place on stage. Inhibition on stage or in daily life simply means awareness of other's approval and disapproval. In creating a role you cannot be bothered by an audience's approval. If you are asked to play the role of a prostitute or homosexual, you cannot worry about what people think. So it is of great importance to you to stay on creative pre-committment at all times and be ready to move in either direction.

The third step toward acting is skill. The subject of an actor's tools, his body and voice, is an exhausting one indeed. And it is an extremely important one. I am uncertain as to Gestlat's potential use in this area except perhaps in its capacity to give will and drive to an actor to develop theatrical skills.

The mobilization of an actor's tools are both necessary and important. It can be achieved by daily exercise. This daily exercise, to me, is a drill process - like a dancer warming up his body without a particular choreography or a singer warming up his voice without singing a particular melody - and I call it "actor's warm up." The techniques of vocal and

body movement has achieved much advancement and is used widely in educational institutions today. "Actor's warm up" is out of the scope of this paper since basically I am dealing with actor's inner mobilization (tune up).

To summarize the Gestalt approach is to say an inner quest for self actualization and awareness is a starting point. The second step is to reach a neutral point and be able to stay on it. The third step is to follow the three steps to acting which are: Will or desire for artistic self expression, development of inborn creativity by "distruction and creative construction," and finally development of skills.

Actor's approach to his environment. - In Chapter III, in the definition of an actor, I pointed out the child/adult and their dynamic interplay require harmonious co-existence within the individual. To achieve a greater whole the inclusion of environment is necessary. So our formulation becomes actor/theatre and their interplay. Following Gestalt, an actor's actuality is his total contact with theatre. What is the difference between an actor's actuality and self actuality? This is a very important question which each actor must answer for himself. I personally am inclined to deny such differentiation.

The word reality is the first target in my aim to present my reasoning. If reality to you is what lies outside of your skin, then your reality is in opposition. What does the word "Shermيران" mean to you? Probably nothing unless you are an Iranian (a particular Iranian). This meaningless word to you has a reality for me (it is part of my actuality). I could tell you it is the name of the devil in Zorastrian (a religion), or I could tell you it is the name of my ex-girlfriend back home, or I could be honest with

you and say it is the name of the town where I was born. In any case it has no reality for you, even if such a place exists. It is of no importance or use to you. In fact, it has no reality for me in the immediate sense. In the "here and now" concept, for all the good it does me, it could be non-existent. "Here and now," I have more use for the pencil I am using than all the Persian literature, social-cultural background and my home town. It remains in my memory bank. If we are to take an organism and its environment as a whole and talk about total contact as self reality; what once I was in contact with cannot and should not be part of my present actuality. So is the case with an actor, regardless of his actuality the change of environment dictates a different actuality. An actor who loses contact with the theatre while performing (his present environment) and tries to hang onto his past environment is as much in trouble as I would be if I tried to communicate in Persian with my thesis advisor. For example, as actor has a fight with his wife before a performance (actor's environment). Now if during the performance he tries to contact the past environment and his fight with his wife, he loses contact with his present environment.

The stage is the actor's environment, and like any environment, has its own properties. If one leaves America to live in Africa, certain adaptations must take place in order to live harmoniously with the environmental dictation.

The stage, too, as an environment, dictates certain adaptations (set and lighting) that must take place. Heat in India and Arabia dictate certain adjustments in clothing, so does the stage (costume). The sociological environment dictates certain behavior. Sometimes it dictates a specific clothing (military environment), sometimes it even dictates abandonment

of biological needs (some far Eastern religions demand a very strict diet. Sexual intercourse is denied to nuns). What is real and factual in one environment (physical or social) is not necessarily real and factual in another environment. In short, every environment has its own unique characteristics and has a reality for the organism that is in contact with it. The stage, too, has its own unique characteristics. Its timelessness, for instance, is unique; it can travel to the past or future, it can go through days, months or years in minutes or hours. Its placelessness is unique; in this environment, murder and death are acted out, not carried out (although the death of a character really takes place even though the actor stays alive). The houses in this unique environment are built with wood and muslin (Indian's teepees and Eskimo's igloos are not build with what is normally used). This unique environment is an actor's environment, and while he is in contact with it, it is his reality.

If we are to take the notion of the social actor to heart, and his role playing in daily life as a reality of his existence, then we must take an actor's role playing as his reality.

An artist's painting, regardless of how unreal and abstract it may seem to an observer, has a reality for the artist. So does an actor's character and environment; it has, and should have, a reality for the actor. An observer or an audience can define this work of art the way he wishes to. To him theatre could be an illusion, an imitation of life, recreative make believe and what have you. To an actor, theatre is a reality in its unique way.

I defined the actor as a combination of child/adult. Playing is reality for a child. He does not play because he is tired of daily life

and needs to get away from it all. He plays because he needs to play. It is a biological need for him. As an adult, one may think, "I don't understand this child. He left his food and went out to play." It is hard for the adult to understand the importance of play to a child. The adult thinks playing is a waste of time. The child thinks playing is using time actively.

Not trying to drive the point any further, my summation would be that theatre, disregarding the observer's point of view, is part of reality to an actor. I believe it is in vain to regard it otherwise. The actor spends a great deal of time in the theatre. The combination of time spent on a production by actors, director, designers, and technical staff is a staggering number of hours. It is in vain to think this time and effort spent are wasted. I believe (and suggest an actor should believe) that the time spent in this group creativity, in this medium which is the meeting ground for all the arts, should be considered time used actively and creatively. I suggest not only that the actor's approach to his art is a combination of self actuality, creative pre-committment, development of will, inborn artistic creativity and skill, but also includes an actor's environment as part of his reality.

CHAPTER V

USE IN ACTOR'S EXPERIMENTS AND IMPROVISATION

Gestalt, I think, can be of great service in augmenting the current use of improvisational experiments. It may have the capacity to help solve some of the inherent problems and can contribute new and vital experiments to the repertoire of improvisation.

Such implementation should start with the following basis: The actor's sensitivity and personal experience is often taken for granted. Many of the improvisations force a student actor to perform. Most teachers try to adapt a rigid systematic program that will cover the quarter. Most experiments are designed to be done during the class period and in the class room. They demand group participation with no regard for personal preference, likes and dislikes. Some of the exercises are given to the class with no explanation of what will happen or what good it will do, or how it would apply to acting.

The most important, and at the same time, the most ignored, aspect of teaching acting is the fact that the teacher takes for granted that a student actor is an open system. By open system, of course, I mean the neutral state of being and self awareness. The teachers forget that they are working with individuals who are inhibited and look for approval of the teacher and the group (social actor). That is why I think Gestalt Therapy is so important as a starting point. It is designed to bring an individual to self actualization and awareness, which automatically will dominate self consciousness. The aim should be to make one aware of one's feelings, emotions and experiences before asking him to show the manifest action of such feelings, emotions and experiences.

An exercise or experiment should be conducted in an appropriate way - that is to say, it should be an experiment. A student should not be put in situations which demand a performance. The problem is a simple one to solve. Instead of asking a student to try to be someone else and in a special situation, ask him what would he do if he were this particular person in this particular situation. It also helps if he is not graded on these experimental situations.

A systematic pattern that is designed in detail by a teacher before class time might look good to the eyes of the administrator but it does not necessarily mean it will be successful. A teacher must know his class, for each class has a psychology of its own and must be treated differently and with spontaneity.

There must be a connection between daily life and the classroom. An actor's laboratory is his daily life. Here he should experience and experiment. The connecting bridge is also important in sense awakening. An actor must use his senses with awareness and must remember the experience caused by sensation.

In creative arts the feelings of an individual are very important. A teacher cannot demand everyone's participation but rather he should find games that would create interest in everyone.

Exercises and experiments must have a particular aim and this aim should be explained to the student.

In Gestalt Therapy the starting point is "here and now," so I make this the starting point for actors as well. "Here and now," as you recall from Chapter I, is an inseparable part of self actualization. In order to reach the child within, you must come to your sense of actuality. With a sense of reality and awareness you soon discover the child. He is honest,

he is direct. His needs have immediacy. What he wants is here and now. Your answers are always there and later.

The dynamic interplay of child/adult in an aware and healthy person is automatic. This automatic interplay is triggered by an emergency; what is important here and now. Let us assume that you are asleep. You wake up to find a fire in your room. The first emergency is to get out. As soon as you are safely out of the fire and on the street, the second emergency comes to attention, and that is dependent upon your habit of clothing for bed. If you go to bed naked, the emergency then is to cover yourself. If you inhale too much smoke, the emergency is to cough and regain your normal breathing, and so on. You see, in the case of an accident, this automatic interplay takes place with no interference. But in the course of daily life, much interference goes on. With awareness, one finds an emergency and acts accordingly.

The concept of "here and now" is of extreme importance to the actor. An actor should be aware of emergencies as they appear on stage from moment to moment. What do you want, or what emergency brings you on the stage? You are often asked by a director to take a few moments before entrances to get into the character. Most actors take this time repeating their lines and fixing their costumes, or spending this time in "forced concentration" which will end up in anxiety, stage fright and nervousness. Taking a few moments before an entrance does not mean what I call "wing analysis," or analyzing your character and returning to pre-rehearsal and rehearsal periods. You have to be "here and now." Take this few minutes to think what you want, what is the emergency here and now. After making an entrance, your here and now naturally changes, so does your emergency. The words "action" and "reaction" are common words in theatre. Let me

explain that what these words mean in relation to the "here and now" concept and the immediacy of the emergency. Let us assume your emergency at the present is to enter the stage and take an important file from your desk and exit. The desk is in the usual place and the file is right where you left it and there is no change what so ever in the room in general (I am assuming this is your room) and there is no one present. So you enter, take the file, and you exit - this is "action." The slightest change or unexpected rearrangement will change your emergency. Let us say the file is not on the table - then the immediate emergency is to find the file. If there is a person present the emergency changes. These changes of emergency, whether they are caused by objects or people, is "reaction." It is "here and now" and "emergency" that will give an actor's performance spontaneity and reality.

Furthermore, this emergency has to be "organic." That is to say, it has to have "organic concentration." Your emergency has to be real to you and you must be aware of "otherness" that changes your emergency. It is often said that acting is reacting, and rightly, too, for your here and now constantly changes and if you are aware, your emergency constantly changes. Acting alone is meaningless and dull on stage and it is habitual and mundane off stage.

The following experiments are taken directly from the Gestalt Therapy. They are not designed to make one a great actor, but I believe they are the first and necessary steps toward acting, for I believe one must first be an open, sensitive and aware person, a developed organism as a whole, in contact with his environment before one can become an actor.

Gestalt experiments should not be treated as gimmicks or games. They should be taken as a way to self actuality and should be treated with

personal honesty and sincerity.

"Here and now" experiment #1. - Try for a few minutes to make up sentences stating what you are at this moment aware of. Begin each sentence with the words "now" or "at this moment" or "here and now." The experiment is a simple one indeed. Of course, as a starting point verbal artificiality is necessary. As simple as the experiment seems, many people have trouble staying with a here and now situation. How long did you stay with it? Were you aware of all parts of your body? Did you make contact with all the objects surrounding you? Did the adult within you say, "This is silly,"? Why did you stop when you did? Repeat the experiment again. Be aware but do not interfere. If the sight of a trophy hanging on your wall takes you to the time that you received it and the reason for getting it, do not interfere, say, "I should stay with the present, this is in the past." You have to do this with spontaneity. It will take time before one can really stay with the here and now. It is like learning to ride a bicycle. It is hard at first to stay on one, but as soon as you learn to ride it, it becomes easy. The bicycle becomes an extension of your body and you can ride and control it as though you were on your own feet. Now once again, repeat the experiment, using the verbal artificiality here and now.

It will assist you not only to realize (make real) the nowness of your experience, but also to verbalize what you are doing or about to do, thus sharpening your awareness that it is you who experience whatever it may be. Feel the meaning of the now - here as your own now - here; thus, 'Now I, with my breathing body sitting here in the chair, the chair is in the room, the room is in the neighborhood, - now in the afternoon, this particular day, in this twentieth century - I now - here and doing so and so.'¹

¹ F. S. Perls, et al., Gestalt Therapy (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 33-34.

"Here and now" experiments consist of two parts which are equally important in awareness of self actuality. 1) To use "now" or an equivalent in every sentence, and 2) to discover your resistance to doing so.

The authors of Gestalt Therapy present the theory of these two parts in this manner:

To the extent that your feeling of actuality has been split off from your workaday personality, the effort to experience actuality will rouse anxiety (masked, perhaps, as fatigue, boredom, impatience, annoyance) - and what specifically rouses your anxiety will be the particular resistance by which you throttle and prevent full experience.²

Experiment #2. - Changing the resister to the assister. In the search for the stage actor and the explanation concerning ego boundary, I mentioned the outer forces that work on an individual and eventually become an inner control. Here we are talking about inner resistance. In outer control, I stated that each society has its own value system, and an individual, through the processes of identification with one's society, adapts his social value system, and makes it his own. Here the concept of right and wrong is strongly formed, an exclusivism that denies the right of being right to the alienated party. Adaptation of a systematic value scale, not being natural for an organism, creates a resistance of which, for the most part, we are not even aware. The first experiment is basically designed so that you can come to a feeling of self actualization and become aware of this resistance. Once aware of these resisting forces, how can we correct it? First of all we know that any unbalanced situation is caused by leveling the neutral point in favor on one or the other side of the scale. Only by returning to the neutral point is the balance regained. This is of

² Ibid., p. 40.

the utmost importance to an actor. Only by returning to neutral can he give rise to different Gestalt formations concerning the child/adult concept. As long as the adult stays on one side of the scale, thinking he (the child within) is childish and silly, I am mature and sensible, or he is warm and emotional, I am cold and calculating, the free interplay of child/adult is impossible. So an actor has to have a neutral point of view toward the child/adult within him and has to see both as parts of the whole, and with awareness, allow the harmonious co-existence of both.

The authors of Gestalt Therapy call this neutral point "creative pre-committment" which means "the situation of being at the 'indifference point' of continuism, poised between but aware of and interested in the potential situations which extend in either direction. One feels the beckonings to action, but is not yet committed to either side."³

As a first step in this experiment: "Think of some pairs of opposites in which neither member could exist were it not for the real or implied existence of its opposite."⁴

Hopefully this experiment will help you to realize that in the first place you cannot present a long list of such oppositions and, secondly, some are not genuine opposites, and others are opposites only in a very specific context. Thirdly, you find some pairs with additional phenomena fitted in intermediate positions. For example "beginning - end" has an in-between term, "middle"; "past - future" has "present"; "desire - aversion" has "indifference". With this awareness and insight, carry on the opposite game further and see how much you can stay on the neutral point.

³ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

Consider some everyday life situations, objects or activities as if they were precisely the opposite of what you customarily take them to be. Imagine yourself in a situation the reverse of your own, where you have inclinations and wishes exactly contrary to your usual ones. Observe objects, images and thoughts as if their function or meaning were the antithesis of what you habitually take them to be. Furthermore, confronting them thus, hold in abeyance your standard evaluations of good or bad, desirable or repugnant, sensible or silly, possible or impossible. Be satisfied to stand between them - or rather above them - at the zero-point, interested in both sides or the opposition but siding with neither.⁵

"The benefit which comes from developing your ability to see things in reverse - to be uncommittedly interested in the opposites - is the power to make your own evaluations." This reversal game can be played with much fun. For instance, reverse "p" to be "q", or turn it to be "b", spelling words backwards, like pal and lap. Let me refer to Figure #2 in this paper (Chapter II). The idea of reversal and "creative pre-committment" is simply the ability to see both the young lady and the old hag. There are those who are incapable of seeing one of the other without help. Again be aware of the resistance. You have to let go and be honest with yourself. If you think this is silly or childish, then you have to be aware of your thinking so. More likely you will feel the resistance. One of the hardest opposites is to think of yourself as the opposite sex. All of us have a habitual way of doing things; for instance, shaving. Change the habit and see what happens. "Consider what the situation would be if you hadn't gotten out of bed this morning. What would happen in a certain situation if, for once, you said 'no' instead of 'yes'."⁶

Daydreams, too, are spontaneous reversal experiments, and their meaning is usually much more obvious. What we fantasy ordinarily

⁵ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁶ Ibid., p. 47.

is the reversal of a present frustration. If broke, we fantasy winning the sweepstakes. If jilted, we wallow in fantasied revenge. If we feel like a nobody, our daydreams put the world at our feet.⁷

It is through reversal and use of imagination that we can break our routine.

For the most part, our 'obvious' preferences and 'natural' ways of looking at things are mere hand-me-downs. They become routine and 'right' because we hold back from even imagining the opposite. Where people lack imagination it is always because they are afraid even to play with the possibility of something different from the matter-or-fact to which they cling for dear life. The ability to achieve and maintain an interested impartiality between imagined opposites, however absurd one side may seem, is essential for any new creative solution of problems.⁸

The understanding of this notion is of great importance to an actor. For invariably actors are asked to perform a character which is in opposition to the actor's personality. Here it is not only a question of imagination, but you are asked to be him for the interval of the play. You are given his lines and emotions. You have to create, or recreate, him from written words to a real person. An actor must be able to enter and maintain his "creative pre-committment" if he is to give himself to the commitments of another person, the character he portrays. To say attain a "creative pre-committment" attitude or awareness toward your efforts and reactions is to say concentrate on your actuality.

Experiment #3. - I have already talked about concentration (Chapter II) and what we habitually call concentration and organic concentration. It's importance to acting has prompted Stanislavsky to call it the very secret of acting. I will give you a Gestalt experiment:

For a brief period pay attention to some object - for example, a chair. As you look at it, notice how it clarifies itself by dimming out the space and objects around it. Then turn to some other nearby visual object and observe how this, in turn, begins to have quite

⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

a different background. Likewise, attend to some sound that is occurring and notice how other sounds form a background. Finally, attend to some body-feeling, such as a twing or itch, and observe how here, too, the rest of your body-feeling recedes into the background.⁹

Once again here we are working with the figure/ground concept and its dynamic interplay. This free-flowing relation between figure/ground is what keeps our interest and therefore our concentration. Now this relation or interplay can be interrupted in two ways: a) "The figure can become too fixedly attended to so that new interest is not allowed to enter into it from the ground" (this is what occurs in what I call forced concentration). b) "The background can contain points of powerful attraction which cannot be emptied of interest, in which circumstance they actually distract or must be suppressed."¹⁰

Here are two experiments for these two cases.

Stare fixedly at any shape, trying to grasp precisely this shape by itself and nothing else. You will observe that soon it becomes unclear and you want to let your attention wander. On the other hand, if you let your gaze play around the shape, always returning to it in the varying backgrounds, the shape will be seen better.¹¹

Select an impatience-situation: For example, when you are waiting for someone or waiting for a bus. Let yourself freely see and hear the figures and grounds in the environment as instructed in the experiment above - that is, shift about from one to another. You will notice that the amount of excitement involved in the still-continuing impatience-situation (for instance, your mounting anxiety at the lateness of the hour) will diminish the amount of interest you can invest in attention to other matters.¹²

So far in these experiments you have been asked to use your senses and let the interplay take place. In the following experiment you are asked to express your feelings as well.

⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 57.

¹² Ibid., p. 58.

Let your attention shift from one object to another, noticing figure and background in the object - and in your emotions. Verbalize the emotions each time, as, "I like this" or "I dislike this." Also, differentiate the object into its parts: "It is this in it I like, but that I dislike." And, finally, when this much comes naturally to you, differentiate your emotions, thus: "For this I feel disgust" or "For this I feel hatred."¹³

Experiment #4. - Differentiating and unifying: Before reading the following experiment, take a few moments to think of an object. Make it simple, let us say a pencil. While maintaining here and now actuality as your context, let your attention freely play about this pencil. Now, having done this, notice how a pencil is treated in the experiment here.

For an illustration, let us consider such an ordinary object as a pencil. (You will later go through the same procedure with objects of your own spontaneous selection.) Notice first that the pencil is this unique thing. There are other pencils, to be sure, but not this very one. Say its name, "Pencil," and realize vividly that the thing is not the word! The pencil as a thing is non-verbal.

Next, notice as many as you can of the qualities and properties that inhere in and constitute this thing - the cylinder of black graphite, the reddish wood, the weight, hardness, smoothness; the way it is sharpened, the yellow it is painted; the fact that its wood forms a hexagonal prism; the trade-mark, the rubber eraser and the metal which crimps it to the wood.

Next, review its functions and possible roles in the environment - for writing, for pointing out a passage, for wetting with one's tongue or biting on, for sale as a piece of merchandise. Also, to dig into a child's eye if he runs with it and falls; also, its more far-fetched and fantastic uses - to send to someone as a Christmas present or to feed hungry termites.

As you abstract from this unique thing, this pencil, its many qualities and functions, notice how in detail they go together or cohere as a structure - for example, the wood firmly holds and protects the graphite and is gripped by the writing hand.¹⁴

Now that you have read the experiment, compare your observations with

¹³ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

those of the experiment. Choose another object and to the same. Now from objects move to a painting you like.

Notice the lines and the drawing apart from the objects painted and the colors; for example, trace the outlines of the main figures and observe the pattern they form. Examine the pattern formed by the empty spaces between the outlines of the main objects. See the pattern produced by each color in turn - abstract the patch of blue, or yellow, or red. If the picture gives an illusion of three-dimensionality, follow the receding planes - the pattern of the foreground, of the middle-ground, of the background. Trace out the pattern of lights and shadows. Note the way the material is indicated by the texture of the brushstrokes. Last of all, look at the story or scene portrayed, for this is where most people begin to look at a painting and become fixed.¹⁵

Now that you have exercised your visual sense, go to your sense of hearing. This time select a piece of music you like. If you are not a music lover and have a hard time separating the sounds of different instruments, play a record over and over so you can differentiate between different instruments.

Abstract first the appearances of a single instrument. Then pay attention to the rhythm only; the timbre only. Detect what seems to be the melody and what the accompaniment. Often you will find that there are other "inner" melodies that you had not expected. Abstract the harmony as you feel it; that is, notice when the harmony seems unresolved, seems to call for something more to come after it, and when, on the contrary, it seems to resolve and "close." Provided you do this seriously, suddenly all music will come alive for you.¹⁶

In these exercises try as much as you can to add to your awareness; for instance did you notice that no sound comes out of the phonograph unless the needle makes contact with the record? Did you think of this Gestalt formation? If not, verbalize what you are doing with here and now in mind.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

Pay attention to someone's voice. How does it sound? Monotonous? Varying? High pitched? Strident? Melodious? Too soft in volume? Careless in articulation and hard to understand? Too loud? Flowing or faltering? Forced? Easy? Now ask yourself two questions: First, what is your own emotional reaction to the particular qualities of that voice?...Second, what is the emotional background in the other person that produces the particular qualities in his voice?¹⁷

Repeat the experiment with your closer senses, such as smell taste, and touch.

With these closer senses you will find that emotional factors very quickly become involved and that you soon resist or flee from the experiment. Upon discovering this, do not force yourself to continue, but proceed with the next experiment.¹⁸

Try to apply this experiment to your eating. Is eating an important part of your daily life or is it a quick refueling? Take some time and reconsider.

Notice the relations between the taste of your food and the "taste" of the world. If your food tastes like straw, the world probably seems equally dull. If you relish your food, then the world, also, very likely seems interesting.

Do not in the course of this inventory of your eating habits attempt to rectify any of them other than to eliminate such severe distractions as reading. It is only man who ever comes to regard eating as a necessary evil or an emergency refueling. After all, it is a very important biological and...social function. One certainly would not be tempted to read during the important biological and social function of sexual intercourse. Eating, sexuality and breathing are decisive in the operation of the organism and are worth attending to.¹⁹

What do all these experiments do?

Considering the experiment with the pencil, I am sure you realized as Descartes discovered, that there are certain properties connected to an object. Those that are absolutely permanent and those that are changable. Descartes called these properties respectively "primary" and "secondary".

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

Here the concept of primary and secondary is not philosophically or metaphysically concerned. Neither is the soundness of Descartes' conclusion in question. Here the interest lies in the realization of the various levels of abstraction, and combining as many of these levels as possible together and cohere them in the present experience.

The levels of abstraction consist of: Its thisness, intended functions, accidental, far-fetched and fantastic uses. Here you notice that even a pencil, as a thing, is non-verbal but a level of abstraction. However, its properties are subject to verbalization. Free attending to objects (even as insignificant as a pencil) and the realization of its levels of abstraction, give rise to spontaneous concentration. A word of caution; if concentration on an object should lead to a fantasy, keep the fantasy always returning to and connected with the present experiment object. If you have done this experiment with sincerity and honest, the simple pencil is no longer simple.

By noting the levels of its abstractions, you have, so to speak, created a new pencil. Please note that before constructing this new pencil of yours, you had to go through a process of distruction. The process by which one arrives at differentiated unities, is one of taking things apart and putting them back together. The authors of Gestalt Therapy call this a kind of "aggressive destructiveness and reconstructiveness." The destructiveness is a necessary part of creative construction.

The present parts of a given object, activity or situation must be recombined in a fashion more adequate to the requirements of the here and now actuality. This does not necessarily involve a devaluation of any of the present parts, but rather a re-evaluation of how they need to go together. Apart from detailed analysis and taking apart (destruction), there can be no close contact, excited discovering, and true love for any object (which, as we use the term, always includes Persons).²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

In the above experiments you were asked to use your sensuality. So you might say that the byproduct of concentration experiments is sense awakening. Sense relaxation and sense awakening is of such importance in theatrical practices that it requires a separate treatment. The four experiments mentioned above are intended to increase and sharpen your contact with your environment, or as I mentioned before, self actualization. You know by now that you and your environment are inseparable parts of a whole. Without your environment you would not organize, concentrate and have direction, and without you, your environment would be, for you, non-existent.

Your sense of the unitary interfunctioning of you and your environment is contact, and the process of contacting is the forming and sharpening of this figure/ground contrast, which is...the work of spontaneous attention and mounting excitement. For you as a living being contact is the ultimate reality.²¹

Sense Awakening. - Our senses are the only way through which we contact our environment. This being the case, sharp senses are a necessity for self actuality. Sharp senses for an actor are a must. The times that an actor has been called upon to see, hear, touch, feel, make contact, are numerous. Most actors are capable of looking at objects and people but they do not "see". "Looking" is observing from a removed and unconnected point of view. Seeing is making contact; it's you who sees and it means something to you. You look at a thousand cars go by but you see an accident. You see a car run over a child. In this moment of emergency you are aware of your sight. In that split second that the accident takes place you are more aware of sight than you normally are for most of your daily life.

²¹ Ibid., p. 73

Awareness of the sense of sight also manifests itself when one sees a work of art. One does not look at a painting (unless one has no interest in this form of artistic self expression); one sees a painting. It affects one, giving rise to like or dislike.

It is the same case with sounds. There is some distinction between hearing and listening. One listens to music, the sound of a bird or the sound of an explosion; one hears the sound of a car passing by. An actor is asked to "see" other people and objects on stage, not to "look" at them. He is asked to "listen" to the sounds around him, not to "hear" them. Today the majority of people look, hear and touch, instead of see, listen and feel. Acquiring awareness and sharp senses is advisable to mankind in general, but as I mentioned, it is a must for an actor.

One way of sharpening your sight is to try to remember a sight seen and revisualize it in your mind.

Experiment #5. -

Select some memory which is not too distant or difficult, for example, in fantasy revisit the house of a friend. Close your eyes. What do you actually see? The door - somebody opening it? Furniture? Other people? Do not try to ferret out what is in your "mind" - what you think ought to be there - but simply keep going back to the remembered place and noticing what is there.²²

Let the automatic interplay of figure/ground take its course with no interference. Do not reason that every house has chairs (there must be chairs but where were they); simply see.

Now do a memory experiment as before, but this time, instead of stressing merely vision, attempt to integrate as many senses as possible - not only what you saw, but also what you heard, smelled, tasted, touched, felt in your movements - and try also to recapture

²² Ibid., pp. 79-80.

the emotional tone that went with the experience.

Do you avoid recalling any particular person? Do you notice that you can remember inanimate objects, or photographs of people, but not the persons themselves? Do your remembered situations remain static, or is there movement? Is there drama - motivation - in the scene? Do you get quick glimpses only, or can you follow up the details without losing the whole? Do the images tend to recede or become hazy?²³

In these sense experiments you will find that things you "saw" are clear and things you "looked" at are hazy. Repeat the same experiments with sounds, music, other people's voices. With taste, smell, touch, try to choose simple ones at first such as the taste of lemon, the smell of a rose, the touch of silk, and slowly complicate it by adding combinations.

All of the above experiments must be followed with these general instructions in mind:

- 1) Maintain the sense of actuality - the sense that your awareness exists here and now.
- 2) Try to realize that you are living the experience; acting it, observing it, suffering it, resisting it.
- 3) Attend to and follow up all experiences, the 'internal' as well as the 'external', the abstract as well as the concrete, those that tend toward the past as well as those that tend toward the future, those that you 'wish', those that you 'ought', those that simply 'are', those that you deliberately produce and those that seem to occur spontaneously.
- 4) With regard to every experience without exception, verbalize: 'Now I am aware that...'²⁴

Although I am not directly involving myself with actor's body exercises, a definition of a normal body is in order. An actor should know what a normal body is and how it functions, and many actors seem unaware and confused in this aspect. Normalcy in this sense is similar to my previous

²³ Ibid., pp. 79-80.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

use of the term "neutral" in a psychological sense. A director asks them to relax, they slouch; he asks them to be alive and alert, they tense up; while all the director is asking is for them to be normal. The best definition for our purposes of such normalcy is by Dr. Ida Rolf:

1. Movement is performed with minimum work, that is, minimum expenditure of energy.
2. Motion can be initiated in any direction with maximum ease and speed.
3. Movement can start anywhere with minimum preliminary adjustment of the body.
4. Structure is appropriate to the most adequate functional position of internal organs and nervous system, in other words, the organs are not crowded or unsupported.
5. There is minimum "wear and tear" on the parts of the body.²⁵

Notice that Dr. Rolf's body has little to do with the picture on the first page of the biology text.

Dr. Rolf concludes:

If these criteria are attained, the body will last longer, be physically healthier, move more quickly and gracefully, have more energy and stamina, respond more quickly, and be capable of more appropriate feeling.²⁶

This normal body can be observed in the cat family in particular, and most animals in general. Take note of a cat's movement. An actor at his best is psychologically at a neutral point (creative pre-committment) and his body is in a neutral position ready to move in any direction with a minimum loss of energy.

If one follows the concept of Gestalt as presented in the form of general instructions and keeps the four basic suggestions in mind, a vari-

²⁵ William C. Schutz, Joy. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967, p. 29.

²⁶ Ida Rolf, "Structural Integration." Systematics, Vol. 1, June, 1963.

ety of experiments can be used. Having done "here and now" exercises two or three times as an exercise by itself, you can combine it with other exercises and experiments of your own. For example, in the mirror game (two people stand face to face with one being the image of the other and trying to copy every movement in as much detail and exactness as possible), you can ask the image to verbalize with the here and now concept in mind or ask both leader and image to verbalize simultaneously, saying "Now we are...." A teacher can ask for silent or mental verbalization during any experiment. Actors sometimes are asked during a rehearsal to verbalize their body movements, describe objects and people, keeping the present tense. "Here and now" experiments can be done anywhere, at any time. Ask your group to do the experiment during the lunch hour or set a special meal for doing this experiment in combination with taste awakening.

In the experimental group that I conducted (Fall Quarter of 1971, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, with the cooperation of the Department of Drama), the experiments were based on the concept of the child/adult within an individual. We devoted three class periods to the leaves. Being Autumn, an abundant amount of falling leaves was available. On the first day the group was asked to spend half an hour outside doing what they felt like with leaves - look at them, touch them, run through them, lay on them or play with them. After half an hour we returned to class to talk about our experience. The result was as varied as there were students. (At that time I was not so concerned with Gestalt, rather I was interested in the child/adult concept.) One student did not want to come back, he ran through leaves, gathered them together in a pile, kicked them into the air, then made a Japanese kind of fan by placing several leaves together. He used this fan to fan himself, fan others as if they were some

exotic royalty from the East, then used it as a crown for himself and became royalty; then he covered himself as if he were naked, then he was a peacock, and I don't know what else, for I left him outside by himself and returned to class with the others. He returned to class some 15 minutes later breathless and smiling. I asked about his experience and his reply was rather short. He said, "Wow." Later he asked the class if they noticed how many different colors of leaves there were. He explained, "I always thought that the falling leaves were yellow. Oh, boy, was I wrong." I don't intend to report on every individual, but let me say that one individual did almost nothing but observe the others. The wind blew a leaf to his feet; he picked it up and asked me, "What should I do with it?" I did not answer. He dropped it and smilingly said, "Come with the wind and gone with the wind."

These two were crowned with leaves respectively as child and adult for the week.

The second day the group was asked again to spend half an hour outside gathering leaves that interested them in color, form, and texture, and return to class and paste them on paper in any form or pattern they wanted. I asked my child of the week why he chose this particular leaf - his answer was, "It tastes good." I asked the same question of my adult of the week and he replied, "It is colorful, and looks artistic, doesn't it?" The child pasted his leaf on a folded piece of paper and made a personal note out of it. I don't know what the note said inside but outside is said, "Tastes as good as it looks." The adult pasted his leaf on a piece of paper and called it, "A leaf pasted on a piece of paper."

On the third day they were asked to gather leaves and with the combined effort and in total agreement paste them on a large piece of paper.

During this whole week the students were asked to think of the group when they were away from it any time they noticed the leaves, tell other people about falling leaves, get other peoples' reactions to their matter-of-fact statements, and report to the group. At the end of the last period the adult suggested we all go out and run through leaves. He explained, "I don't feel silly about running through leaves. I think leaves are wonderful." The child said, "Let's do, we are not going to see falling leaves in winter, spring, or summer, boy, it'll be a long time before leaves fall again."

A systematic summary of the above experiment might be useful in suggesting the potential of Gestalt in exploring the principles and discoveries of improvisational acting experiments:

Premise - There is child/adult within every individual.

Subjective - Realization of coexistence of adult and child within the individual.

Object of Experience - leaves (chosen spontaneously).

Conditions - 1) Individual freedom
2) One week duration (in and out of class)
3) No discrimination toward child or adult

Process - 1) Individual exploration
2) Individual creativity
3) Group creativity

Results - 1) Existence of child/adult within an individual
2) Child/adult is not a 50-50 proposition
3) either child or adult could take the dominant position within an individual
4) The balance between child and adult could be established by experiments if a sufficient amount of time is allowed

Conclusion - 1) Theater games should have an aim
2) Students should have freedom of self expression
3) The time involved must be adequate

- 4) There should be a "bridge" between class work and daily life. Experiments must be carried out in some way outside of class periods.
- 5) Not only should the individual creativity be developed but group creativity as well.
- 6) There should be no discrimination toward the participant and the non-participant.
- 7) Non-participants should be guided to search within themselves for the reason for not participating (an experiment can be set up for a non-participant and his awareness. Ask for volunteers for a game you have in mind. Continue the game with the volunteers and ask others to be aware of the want and don't want battle that is taking place within them. Here again the idea is not to blame one for not volunteering - one is not a bad boy for not wanting - but make him aware. Is it the battle between child and adult (and usually called inhibition)? Is it lack of interest in the game? Is it muscular fatigue? And so on.)
- 8) Experiments must be conducted with spontaneity.
- 9) Organize experiments in blocks rather than in detail.
- 10) Don't exercise your authority as a teacher, do not interfere with the creativity of an individual but guide, be aware of the individual's efforts.

This chapter is solely devoted to experiments and improvisations. I mentioned that the actor's sensitivity and personal experience is taken for granted, and he is forced to perform. Also, experiments are limited to the class period.

Then I suggested the corrective process as the personal experience, openness of an individual is of great importance. Self actuality is the starting point, and a "bridge" must connect class work and daily life. Self awareness (being of such importance in the process of experimentation) is dealt with in the Gestalt Therapy experiments with commentary paragraphs on its relation to acting. I suggested that Gestalt experiments can be combined with other experiments as they are practiced today in acting classes. Finally I presented an experiment that was conducted personally.

I suggest that my personal experiment could be a format for other invented experiments. I also believe that some of the suggestions in

this chapter could be of help in setting up a useful experiment. I further suggest that Gestalt Therapy experiments are a must, and should be a starting point. I keep an open mind to the inventions of others who use Gestalt concepts with creativity and spontaneity.

CHAPTER VI

USE IN TRAINING

Esperiments are aimed at actor training and development. Training necessitates the presence of trainee and trainer, or simply student and teacher. Just as Gestalt has established a different relationship between "patient" and "therapist", it seems a deviation from the traditional student/teacher relationship might be in order when considering the teaching of acting.

What the doctor sets in motion the patient continues on his own. The "successful case," upon discharge, is not a "cure" in the sense of being a finished product, but a person who now has tools and equipment to deal with problems as they may arise. He has gained some elbow-room in which to work, unencumbered by the cluttered odds and ends of transactions started but unfinished.

...It is not a question of increased "social acceptability" or improved "interpersonal relations," as viewed through the eyes of some extraneous, self-constituted authority, but the patient's own awareness of heightened vitality and more effective functioning. Though others, to be sure, may also notice the change, their favorable opinion on what has happened is not the test of therapy.¹

The traditional concept of teaching has always been troublesome when applied to acting. This teaching manifests itself most clearly in impericle science. Here the concept is to provide a formula or a principle as a tool for an individual to use in solving problems or calculating the properties of a certain phenomenon. In teaching mathematics a teacher provides a student with tools such as addition and subtraction so he can apply them when the problem arises. Mathematics provides a tool with which an individual can figure his income, expenses and savings. In Biology you learn

¹ F. S. Perls, et al., Gestalt Therapy. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), p. 15.

about the functions of the heart, lungs, kidneys and so on. In Botany you learn photosynthesis, water transmission, and the process of reproduction. In Physics we are exposed to gravitation, the Aristotolian notion of dynamics and so on. In all impericle processes of teaching and learning we provide an individual with information and tools that he did not have before being introduced to the educational process. Teaching in a traditional way (if I may call it traditional) tends to suggest a kind of addition to an individual, an accumulation of knowledge. This accumulation of knowledge and information could be applicable to daily life and bear a useful practical application. It also could be of no practical use at all (Philosophy is an example), but food for thought. I conclude teaching in a traditional way is offering an individual a set of rules, formulas and information that are either applicable to his daily life or not. It is an addition to an individual in the sense that he did not have it before being taught.

If teaching means adding something to an individual that he did not possess before, then I say you cannot teach acting. Acting, I claim, is an undoing process, an unlearning, a self-destruction for the purpose of creative construction. The teaching of acting is not adding something to an individual but subtracting what he, unnecessarily, added. Besides, there is no set pattern, as yet, for human behavior. So it is impossible to provide one with the formula that does not exist. The general notion of anger, of course, could be formulated but generality acting is not an authentic kind of acting. As I mentioned before, acting is a need (to the actor) for a personal, articulate self expression; no generality can satisfy the need.

I have tried to point out that acting cannot be thought of in conven-

tional terms. The question is, then, what is a teacher under these unconventional terms?

A teacher to me is (the same as a therapist is to Gestalt Therapy) what the chemist calls a catalyst. A catalyst is "an ingredient which precipitates a reaction which might not otherwise occur. It does not prescribe the form of the reaction, which depends upon the intrinsic reactive properties of the materials present, nor does it enter as a part into whatever compound it helps to form. What it does is to start a process, and there are some processes which, when once started, are self-maintaining or autocatalytic."² This I hold to be the case in teaching. What the teacher sets in motion the student continues on his own. A guide, so to speak, rather than the provider of answers to your questions. The difference is simply this - when you have a guide, you do the walking yourself, when you ask a question you demand a solution from someone else. So taking the situation in reverse, when you guide, you leave the walking to the follower, when you answer the question you solve the problem for another.

Learning is nothing but discovery that something is possible. To teach means to show a person that something is possible.³

The word discovery is directed to you, the learner, not the teacher. He does not discover it for you but you discover that something can be done. The question mark when one asks, "Why," becomes the hook of a demand for environmental support. Such a demand could be fulfilled in impericle science perhaps, but not in connection with acting.

Here I suggested the teacher in impericle science can only explain and

² Ibid., p. 15.

³ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 38.

answer your questions. In acting he can only help you to find the answer to your questions. The ultimate teacher, then, is you. Here you, as a student of acting, are responsible for your own achievement. Gestalt Therapy as I suggest it is a guide to teachers as well as to students.

The aim of Gestalt Therapy is to guide you to reach self actuality. Note that I said "guide you." This, of course, will put most of the responsibility on you. Gestalt does not promise you a rose garden, it shows you where it is and how to get there. The rest is up to you. You must want to; you have to have will and desire. Without will, Gestalt is a philosophy, it is words, a psychological verbalization. The first step is will. In the second place, Gestalt helps you to sharpen your receptor and become an open system. If you are to become an open system, you must start being honest with yourself. Remember that Gestalt does not give you a systematic way of life to follow, it does not dictate a different set of moral codes. The Gestalt way is the natural way - it is your way. It is inclusive in its philosophy. That is to say, no individual or group has a monopoly on truth, but truth is on the hilltop and men are climbing this hill through the path they choose (a common concept of truth according to Eastern religions). So you can be honest with yourself without any penalty or terrifying consequences. Remember the Gestalt prayer: "You don't have to live up to my expectations." The third step in Gestalt is to be responsible for your behavior. You cannot blame your past, parents, or upbringing as the responsible agents for your behavior. You are what you are, you are what you do, and you, only you, are responsible.

The three approaching steps to Gestalt are: will, honesty and responsibility, and the key word in Gestalt experiments is patience. You must remember that society has been molding you for quite awhile, and much un-

doing must take place, which is time consuming. Creative construction necessitates destruction, so to reach the neutral point or "creative pre-committment" we must destroy the set pattern. Gestalt does not offer instant joy, neither does it claim a magical power over the souls of mankind; it is a slow way to self actualization, a way to being. "awareness of being" should be your only expectation. Your destination with Gestalt is to reach the point that you, as a whole organism, are in total contact with your environment. Once you reach this point you are your own master. You, as an organism, spontaneously, naturally, instinctively, will find the way to deal with happenings. Once you fill the holes in your personality and find your center you become your own therapist, or your own teacher.

The very nature of Gestalt mitigates against attempts to define a kind of teacher or guide such as Gestalt oriented teaching requires. There are, however, several qualities, it seems to me, that are suggested by Gestalt as regards to what we should not be. A highly intelligent, recording instrument is not a good teacher.

...experimentalism, sired in method and outlook by physics, which deals with the inanimate, has, as nearly as possible, tried to deal with the living as if it were inanimate. Disregarding the flesh and blood humanity of the investigator, who has tried desperately to make himself nothing more than a disembodied eye, it has studied the living as if from the viewpoint of an impersonal, but highly intelligent, recording instrument.⁴

A teacher should not control the class, but the "situation" should be in charge. This includes, of course, the teacher's situation as well as the students' and classroom. "Every external control...interferes with

⁴ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), p. 21.

healthy working of the organism. There is only one thing that should control: the situation."⁵

The teacher should not try to find out what is wrong with the student and then tell him, but he should teach the student how to learn about himself. This, of course, requires the teacher's awareness.

The job is not, in line with widespread misconception, for the doctor to "find out" what is wrong with the patient and then "tell him." People have been "telling him" all his life and, to the extent that he has accepted what they say, he has been "telling" himself. More of this, even if it comes with the doctor's authority, is not going to turn the trick. What is essential is not that the therapist learn something about the patient and then teach it to him, but that the therapist teach the patient how to learn about himself. This involves his becoming directly aware of how, as a living organism, he does indeed function. This comes about on the basis of experiences which are in themselves non-verbal.⁶

A teacher should teach with the concept of the organism, as a unified and whole being in mind. This is to say, train body, mind, motion, and so on. In another way, the "outer" and the "inner" parts of an individual.

Undue emphasis on either side can produce only pseudo-cures. The first puts too much weight on what is called "adjusting to reality," which largely means complying more fully with the status quo as conceived and defended by "the authorities." On the other hand, if the therapist works with the "body" alone, he may get the patient to simulate and express in the therapeutic session various feelings, but these, unfortunately, will not match up with or will be actually irrelevant to what he experiences his situation to be when he is away from the therapist. Only if the "outer" and the "inner" can be harmonized and integrated can the patient ever be discharged as "cured."⁷

A "cured" student is an aware individual. And, I believe, that awareness per se - by and of itself - can be curative. Then the ultimate goal of the teacher or guide, it seems to me, is to help the student find the

⁵ F. S. Perls, et al., Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 20.

⁶ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 15-16.

⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

teacher within himself.

Many teachers of acting have tried to break the traditional teaching methods. While many of the attempts have resulted in merely a change of rhetoric instead of substance, others have valiently explored new ground, many of them inspired by Stanislavsky. It seems to me an injection of Gestalt into the experimental acting schools might be just what is needed to solve some very old problems.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

At attempt to draw conclusions from this paper prompts me to begin with a brief summary of the salient point with which I have dealt.

The individual's self actuality is disturbed in modern society, and his return to his organic wholeness and contact with his environment is necessary before he is to express himself artistically and creatively. With this premise I point out a change in the process of acting is feasible and perhaps necessary. The change I suggest is not a systematic pattern designed to aid an actor in pursuit of his acting career, but a way to self actualization and "actor's tune up."

With the aid of Gestalt concept, figure/ground and its dynamic interplay, I suggested that there is a child and an adult within every individual and concluded that the actor, like everyone else, has child/adult within him. The ability to act is simply the ability to stay at a neutral point which activates the dynamic interplay of child/adult and their harmonious co-existence within an individual. This child/adult manifests itself as organic and social actors as one or the other assumes a dominant position. Children are basically organic actors and adults are social actors. To understand the psychology of the stage, the actor has to destroy this counter balance between child and adult.

My answer to the teaching question is: the concept of teaching in an impericle sense is not applicable to acting. Acting is an undoing process, an unlearning, a self-destruction for the purpose of creative construction. I suggested the use of Gestalt for destruction, for stripping the mundane,

ordinary, habitual, phoney and uncreative social masks from one's existential being. With the completion of the destruction I suggested a state of equilibrium (that is to say, "creative pre-committment" in personality and "normal body"). From this neutral point, creative construction begins. The person who has found his center has found his teacher. With total contact and awareness, the teacher within will guide him through the lifelong process of learning and growth. Thus, creative construction, I concluded, is a personal achievement and rests solely on one's will and effort.

The destruction process I mentioned is a hard and time consuming endeavor and I emphasize over and over the importance of desire, will, and honesty on an individual's part.

Being responsible for self and reaching the "creative pre-committment" and having the teacher within oneself, I suggested three steps to acting: First, will and desire, which I claim to be the answer to the question, "Why theatre?" as a basis for creative self expression. I did not formulate a specific answer to this question but pointed out that there should be an organic need included in one's answer. The second step to acting is the development of inborn artistic creativity. The concept of "destruction and creative construction," I pointed out, is helpful to this development. The third step to acting is the mastery of skills. "Actor's warm up" as I called it, has achieved much in actor training though I did not deal with it in detail for my aim was directed to "actor's tune up."

After suggesting three steps to acting, I considered the stage as an actor's environment. Like any other environment, the stage has its own characteristics and is unique in its own way. Every physical or social environment dictates certain actualities or realities to the individual

who is in contact with it. The stage, too, has its own reality and should be as real as daily life to an actor.

The realization that your sequence of thoughts, your surface experience - whatever else it is and whatever it stands for - is first of all something that exists in its own right. Even if something is "only a wish," it is something - namely, the event itself of wishing. It is, therefore, as real as anything else.¹

In a review of my thesis it occurs to me that there are several deficiencies that need explanation. These have been determined in some cases by conscious omissions because of the scope of the thesis, in other cases by the dictates of time and in others by gaps in my knowledge and grasp of the subject.

To elaborate, the following seem to be the most important:

In the adaptation of Gestalt and its potential use in actor training I have excluded many concepts and theories that are presented in Gestalt Therapy. For example I have disregarded the concept and the experiments concerning "Manipulating the self."² I have not dealt with "the modified situation", "Retroflection", "Introjection" and "projections" which are the parts to "Manipulating the self." These exclusions do not necessarily mean that there is no potential use for them in actor training; on the contrary, I believe there is much in Gestalt Therapy that can be used. This paper, I hope, serves as a good introduction for further exploration.

I have also, in the discussion of an actor's environment (the theatre), excluded the audience. This exclusion should not be regarded as being unimportant to the actor's environment, for I consider the audience as an

¹ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1951), p. 82.

² Ibid., pp. 139-218.

Important and unseparable part of an actor's environment. In this thesis I deal basically with the actor's inner self or his psychology, if you will. The audience and actor/audience interplay is worthy of a separate thesis.

This thesis deals with potential use of Gestalt in acting rather than historical practice of Gestalt in acting. The reason lies in the fact that Gestalt Therapy has not as yet penetrated into wide theatrical practice. Although there is very little written material available, I believe there are many individuals who are using the Gestalt concept in acting on an experimental basis. Gathering and organizing the results of these experiments could be of great value.

Another deficiency is that the thesis hovers on a speculative and philosophical level and approaches the inarticulate when practical application is hinted at. Much of this problem of articulation would be taken care of through a genuine application of Gestalt experimentation in acting. At this moment, with due regard to my education and personal experience in theatre, in theory I am convinced that the Gestalt Therapy approach will work in actor training. Of course, a complete conviction should await experimentation and practical application of Gestalt Therapy. Since the approach is neither magic nor an instant cure, I suggest a one year duration for any considerable and correct evaluation. I submit this paper as a guide line, not as a systematic pattern to follow. If I systemize unlearning, it turns into teaching in conventional terms and becomes contradictory. A paradox occurs: any attempt to teach Gestalt may be doomed to failure. Gestalt is not a way of life, but acceptance and awareness of life as it is. My paradox might be resolved through practical application of Gestalt - I would certainly welcome the opportunity to get myself off the speculative hook.

With the foregoing deficiencies duly admitted and recorded, the next conclusion to cover is the wealth of possible explorative realms that have occurred to me in the process of the research and writing of my thesis.

Gestalt's affinities to Eastern religions invite considerable work in that area. For instance it can be used in understanding and explaining Zen ideals and their potential engagement with the acting process.

Perhaps a study might be made relating Gestalt to acting approaches in the Oriental theatre.

Existential basis in Gestalt and existential philosophy of Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger and its possible tie with the theatre can be a subject for study.

Much exploration is needed in the area of teaching. A reappraisal of Stanislavsky in light of Gestalt might be made. The highly praised experimental work of the Polish teacher and director Jerzy Grotowski seems to contain many Gestalt ideas.

The field is already rich with the daring of unorthodox acting teachers. Gestalt could take advantage of it. Many of the experimental teaching methods applied to other disciplines might be investigated for Gestalt potential in regard to acting.

The work of some of the communally oriented theatre companies, such as Julian Beck's Living Theatre, could be explored for its use of Gestalt ideas.

Peter Brook's praise-worthy quest for the universal theatre, or wordless theatre, and his approach as a director and the use of Gestalt for non-verbal communication could have promising results.

Some tentative steps have been made to explain dramatic literature through Gestalt concepts. In particular, Bernard Beckermann has attempted to come to grips with the problem of criticism of avant garde works.

through replacement of traditional criticism with Gestalt.

It seems that all areas of theatre are potentially open for re-evaluation in light of the discoveries of Gestalt. A sentence from Perls' Gestalt Therapy Verbatim has a great deal of value to me personally. It has played a part in the starting of this thesis, and perhaps it should summarize and end this thesis as well.

Maximizing automatic functioning and minimizing awareness in one's life is to welcome death before its time.³

³ F. S. Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbatim, (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 35.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Artaud, Antonin. Theatre and Its Double. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967.
- Benedetti, Robert L. The Actor at Work. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970.
- Benedikt, Michael, and Wellworth, George E., ed. Modern French Theater. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1966.
- Brockett, Oscar G. History of the Theatre. Rockleigh, New Jersey: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1968.
- Brook, Peter. The Empty Space. New York: Avon Book Division, The Hearst Corp., 1968.
- Fallico, Arturo B. Art and Existentialism. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962.
- Funke, Lewis, and Booth, John E., ed. Actors Talk About Acting. New York: Avon Book Division, The Hearst Corp., 1961.
- Heidegger, Martin. Existence and Being. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949.
- Herrigel, Eugene. Zen in the Art of Archery. New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1971.
- Hunter, Diack. Reading and Psychology of Perception. New York: Philosophical Library, 1960.
- Ionesco, Eugene. Notes & Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962.
- Kaffka, Kurt. Principles of Gestalt Psychology. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935.
- Katz, David. Gestalt Psychology. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950.
- May, Rollo, ed. Existential Psychology. New York: Random House, Inc., 1969.
- Perls, Frederick S. Gestalt Therapy Verbatim. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971.

Perls, Frederick S., Hafferline, Ralph F., and Goodman, Paul. Gestalt Therapy. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1951.

Sartre, Jean Paul. The Problem of Method. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. London: Methuen, 1963.

Stevens, Barry. Don't Push the River. Lafayette, California: Real People Press, 1970.